Volume Forty-eight, Number Four, October 1969

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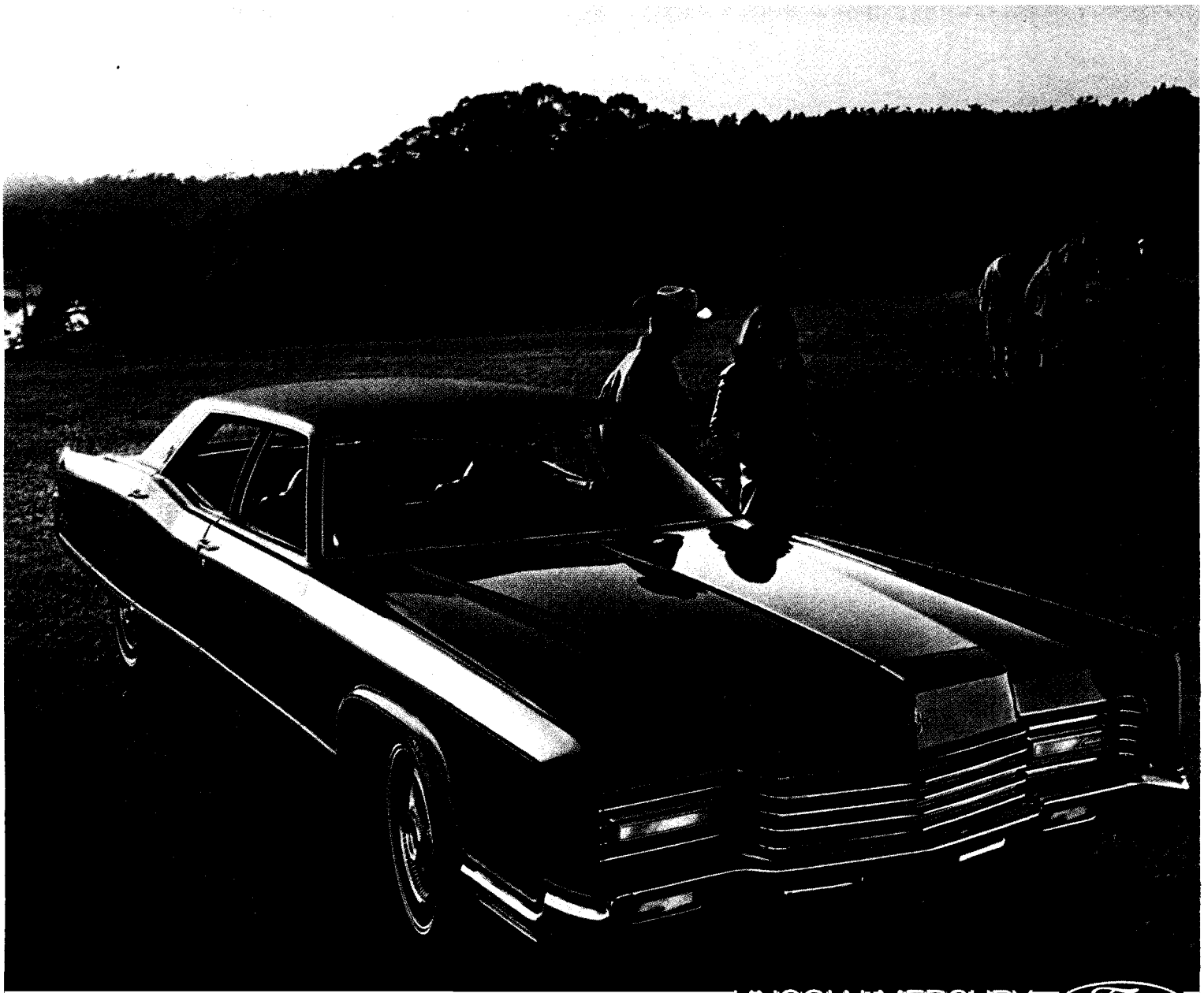

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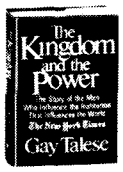

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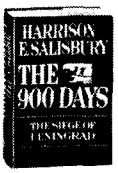

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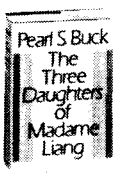

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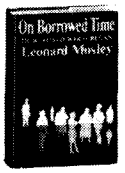

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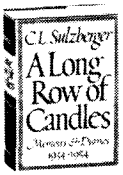

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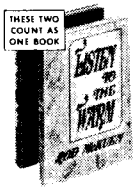

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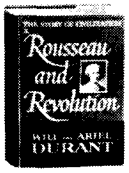

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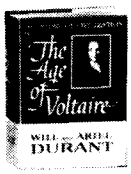

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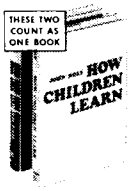

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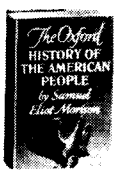

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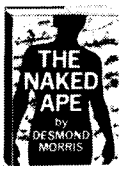

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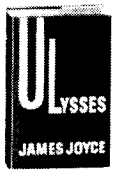

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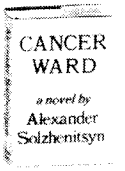

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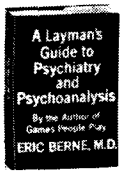

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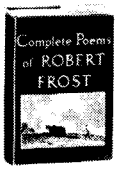

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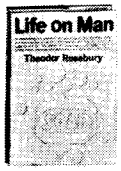

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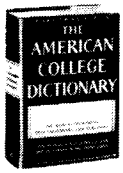

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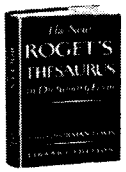

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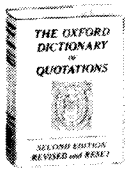

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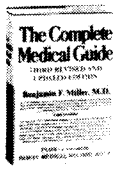

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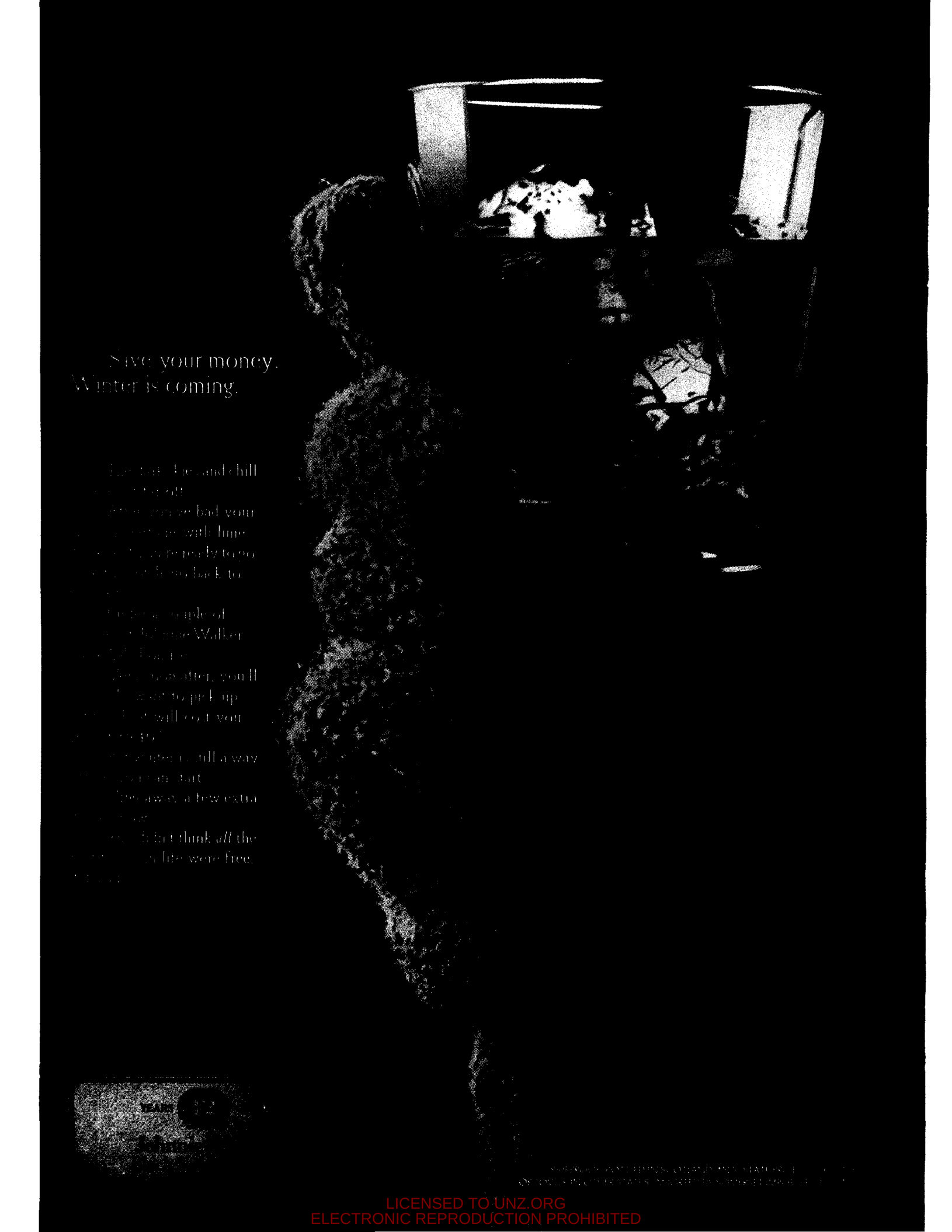

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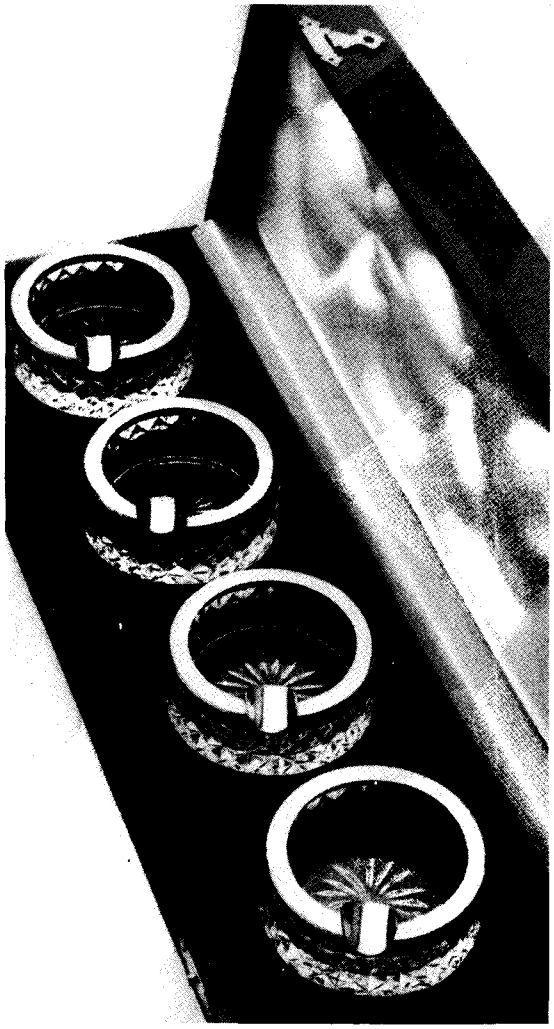

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Letters from Readers

Author's Reply

To the Editor of Commentary

Michael Reisman and Amos Perlmutter ["Letters from Readers," September] have not really grasped what I was trying to say or do in my article, "The Alternatives in the Middle East" [May]. Moreover, their remarks betray one of the worst features that have bedeviled and rendered futile most debates on the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely, an essentially simplistic thinking clad in the garb of aggressive, pompous jargon or arrogant moral authoritarianism.

Mr. Perlmutter, for example, classifies and reclassifies me in all sorts of schools I do not recognize in the course of attacking my territorial swap scheme, but fails to take notice of the simple and clear fact that I propose this scheme not as a translation of the peace-without-annexation idea, but as an *alternative* to it as well as to the idea of a settlement short of peace, which has constituted the subject of the big-power talks. At the end of part two of my article, on page 58, I introduce my swap proposal by saying: "I believe there *is* a third course which could be pursued if and when it should become apparent that the chances of an American-Soviet agreement on peace without annexation (to my mind, the most desirable outcome) were definitely and irretrievably blocked." When a critic misreads an author so completely on such a central structural point, it is a bit difficult for the author to take him seriously on any other point.

Both Mr. Reisman and Mr. Perlmutter fail to take me seriously when I say that "the key to my proposal is an effort to disentangle all these interacting struggles and conflicts," i.e. the Arab-Israeli, Arab-Arab, and big-power clashes. I do not aspire, nor do I think it possible, to settle *all* these conflicts for good and to reach some kind of utopia, but I simply wish to find a way whereby the Arab-Israeli conflict could be disengaged from the other two problems sufficiently to render it more susceptible of solution. That the other struggles will go on I believe to be quite likely. I do argue that, with the Arab-Israeli conflict out of the way, the relation of forces in the Arab-Arab and the big-power struggles *may* be altered in such a way as to make possible the crystallization of a *de facto* stalemate that would in turn make possible genuine stabilization. But even if this should not come about, and even if the inter-Arab struggles should become intensified, the settling of the Arab-Israeli conflict would still be a net gain. The danger to world peace presented by the Middle East situation does not derive so much from the *sharpness* of the struggle going on there—the Yemen war, the Kurdish-Iraqi war, the civil war in the Sudan, for example, have each claimed many times more victims than all the Arab-Israeli wars combined, yet they have at no point endangered world peace. Nor does the danger to world peace arise from any deliberate disposition on the part of either of the big powers to risk mutual confrontation in the region, as was the case, for example, in the days of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The danger, rather, springs from the *complexity* of the situation which renders it extremely volatile, makes possible at any given time drastic and abrupt changes in the constellation of forces like those that produced the May-June 1967 crisis and war, and places all parties concerned in a position of having to make fateful decisions in haste. In this perspective, reducing the explosive complexity of the situation by abstracting from it the Arab-Israel conflict is not something to be sneered at, especially by people addicted to moral thundering.

How is the reduction in complexity to be achieved? I said in my article: "The most obvious feature of the plan is that it would disentangle the question of Israel's existence from the question of Arab unity." Get Israel out of the way of pan-Arabism. Does this mean, as Mr. Reisman charges, urging "great-power complicity in the ambitions of a would-be Mussolini of the Middle East"? Only if one accepts his own naive premises.

In the first place, Mr. Reisman seems to believe *for purposes of this particular point* that if Israel got out of the way in accordance with my scheme, then Nasser would sweep everything before him. This betrays a very poor understanding of the Arab situation. Mr. Reisman is sufficiently informed to know that there are var-

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ious Arab forces that are opposed to Nasser even while subscribing to the ideal of Arab unity and even while finding it necessary occasionally to appease Nasser in order the better to resist him. But he is not, it seems, sufficiently versed in the situation to realize that these forces may very well be able to take care of themselves without the Israeli buffer. When I argue that Nasser is obsessed about the Israeli wedge and thinks that it is this that has frustrated his dreams of unity, I expound Nasser's own "hangup" and the "evidence" he uses to support it; I do not speak of "objective reality" or objective probabilities. Furthermore, insofar as there is some element of reality in Nasser's conception of the obstructing role of Israel, there is at least an equal element of reality in the opposite notion (which Nasser may not see because he doesn't like to see it) that the existence of Israel in a state of conflict with the Arab countries has given him the means to whip the Arab peoples and their reluctant governments into line behind him and thus to give ever renewed impetus to his claim to Arab leadership. The removal of the Israeli wedge, according to my scheme, then, while *presumably* satisfying Nasser enough to induce him to contemplate peace, would not by any means determine the outcome of the inter-Arab struggles. It would probably precipitate a decision one way or the other about the issue of pan-Arabism, and this is all to the good. For as long as that issue is not put to a free test, unhindered by the Israeli complication, it will continue to haunt the stability of the region as a myth that is too strong to die and too weak to command fulfilment.

But let us assume for a moment that what I have just said is all wrong, and that Nasser would actually sweep away everything before him if the Israeli wedge were removed. I would still ask Mr. Reisman: is it *Israel's* business to be the policeman of the Middle East, to see to it that no would-be Mussolinis arise? Israel needs to protect its own security against Arab hostility no matter who leads it, and this, it seems to me, is accomplished in the plan I propound taken as a package that includes a swap of territories leading to formal peace buttressed by big-power guarantees, demilitarized zones, arms limitations, and so on.

I may be wrong in this assessment and I am receptive to arguments that would show me to be so; but until I am convinced that Israel's security situation would be worse off in the conditions under discussion than under other feasible alternatives, I must tell the Reismans of this world: "If you want to make the Middle East safe for democracy, *you* go ahead and do it. Don't ask Israel to do it for you. It is too small a country to aspire to such a role, and it has plenty of challenge within its own confines in trying to live up to the best dreams of its progenitors."

Mr. Perlmutter attacks my scheme as impractical on the grounds that Nasser would never accept it. Nasser's pan-Arabism, he contends, is "total"; it is "ideological, political, and cultural" and would not therefore be "limited" or "satisfied" by the removal of the Israeli geographical obstruction. I do not quite understand the meaning of all the terms Mr. Perlmutter uses, but I guess he means to say that Nasser's hostility to Israel is due not solely to the fact that Israel in its present and pre-June boundaries cut him off from Arab countries east of Suez, but is rooted in additional factors that impel him to wish the elimination of Israel from the Middle East altogether. I readily grant this reading of Nasser's mind, but I think that the conclusion Mr. Perlmutter draws from it (that Nasser would therefore never accept a scheme like mine) is childish. How can one make an assessment as to what is possible and what is impossible in diplomacy by basing oneself solely on desire without regard to capabilities, experience, and circumstances? What the United States wanted in Korea and in Vietnam, to mention one example out of scores of possible ones, is one thing, and what it has had to accept in the one place and will have to accept in the other is quite another thing. Mr. Perlmutter himself asserts that Nasser cannot destroy Israel and knows it, and cannot even recover lost Egyptian national territory unaided; then what is the point of all the verbiage about Nasser's "ideological, political, and cultural" pan-Arabism besides giving hifalutin justification to the hysteria that has again and again prevented cool and calm reasoning on this problem? Why is he so certain that Nasser would not accept something very important that he can get, though it be less than what he

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would ideally like but knows is beyond his reach? I am not certain myself that Nasser would actually accept something like my proposal —he may feel that "ratting out" on the other Arab countries would destroy all claim on his part to leadership of the Arab world, or he may simply not have the courage or the gumption to break out of the rut in which he finds himself. However, in a situation in which all the obvious approaches have been tried and failed, I feel that a new approach with any chances of success at all should not remain unvoiced.

Finally, the question of the rights of the Palestinian Arabs. Both Mr. Perlmutter and Mr. Reisman attack my scenario regarding them and the guerrilla movements they sprouted as cynical and unrealistic, and Mr. Reisman further levels the same charge at my treatment of the Arab countries other than Egypt. I cannot treat effectively the "unrealism" part of the charge, since what is realistic and what is unrealistic can only be determined by an extensive study, supported by complete concrete data, of the history and behavior of the countries and governments concerned. Here I can only suggest to the reader two things: to consult my recent study of the subject entitled *From War to War: The Arab-Israeli Confrontation 1948-1967* (Pegasus, 1969), and to compare the degrees of realism in my various proposals with those of Messrs. Reisman and Perlmutter.

As for the "immorality" part of the charge, I believe that in making it Mr. Reisman and Mr. Perlmutter provide two fresh examples of the hypocrisy and casuistry that have attended the discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mr. Reisman generously insists that the Palestinians' right to self-determination must be recognized, but then goes on in effect to do the determining for them. Surely he must know that true self-determination for the Palestinians must mean the elimination of Israel? Since he does not want that, he has to set up limits as to the time in which the self-determining is to become operative (e.g., now and not retrospectively), and the area in which it may apply. On what grounds would he set up these limits? And then, how does he propose to have whatever he has in mind enforced against certain resistance? Does he really think he has answered this question when he says that the four big powers should "see to it" that the Palestinians' right to self-determination should be respected by Israelis and Arabs? Or is he merely trying to assuage a guilty conscience by acknowledging a right he knows cannot be applied?

Mr. Perlmutter's ingenuousness is even more striking. Let Israel recognize *the principle* of the 1947 partition resolution, says he, and let Israelis and Palestinians negotiate *new* and *secure* borders. . . . How nice and simple; all you need to do is assume that the problem you want to solve does not exist. Then, adds Mr. Perlmutter, let Israel indicate to the Palestinians that it "would not mind" if they took over Jordan, as long as Israel's own security is not thereby affected. I do not know whether this is an integral part of the deal, but in any case what if they fail to take over Jordan because King Hussein crushes them, with the support of loyal Palestinians? Would the West Bank Palestinians then continue to live in their new and secure borders within that part of the West Bank that remains after Israel has constituted *its* new and secure borders, or would the deal be off?

No; there will be no end to the hypocrisy and casuistry so long as it is not recognized that the moral claims of Jews and Arabs respectively over Palestine are at one and the same time unassailable and irreconcilable. They are so because they rest on two different moral planes and because there is no third plane onto which both might be raised and morally adjudicated. The rights of one side can be acknowledged as valid and as having been violated or denied without *ipso facto* establishing a moral obligation on the other side to correct this wrong, for correcting the wrong may well mean denying or violating one's own right. In such a situation, *any* solution to the problem will have to be based primarily not on absolute justice but on prudence and the realities of the situation. This is not a universal formula for sanctioning the right of might; it is rather a prescription for a unique and tragic situation, which says that where you cannot right a wrong without creating another wrong, the best solution is that which promises to put an end to the tragic cycle as soon as possible. Not to see this is in effect to opt for the continuation of the cycle.

NADAV SAFRAN
Stanford, California

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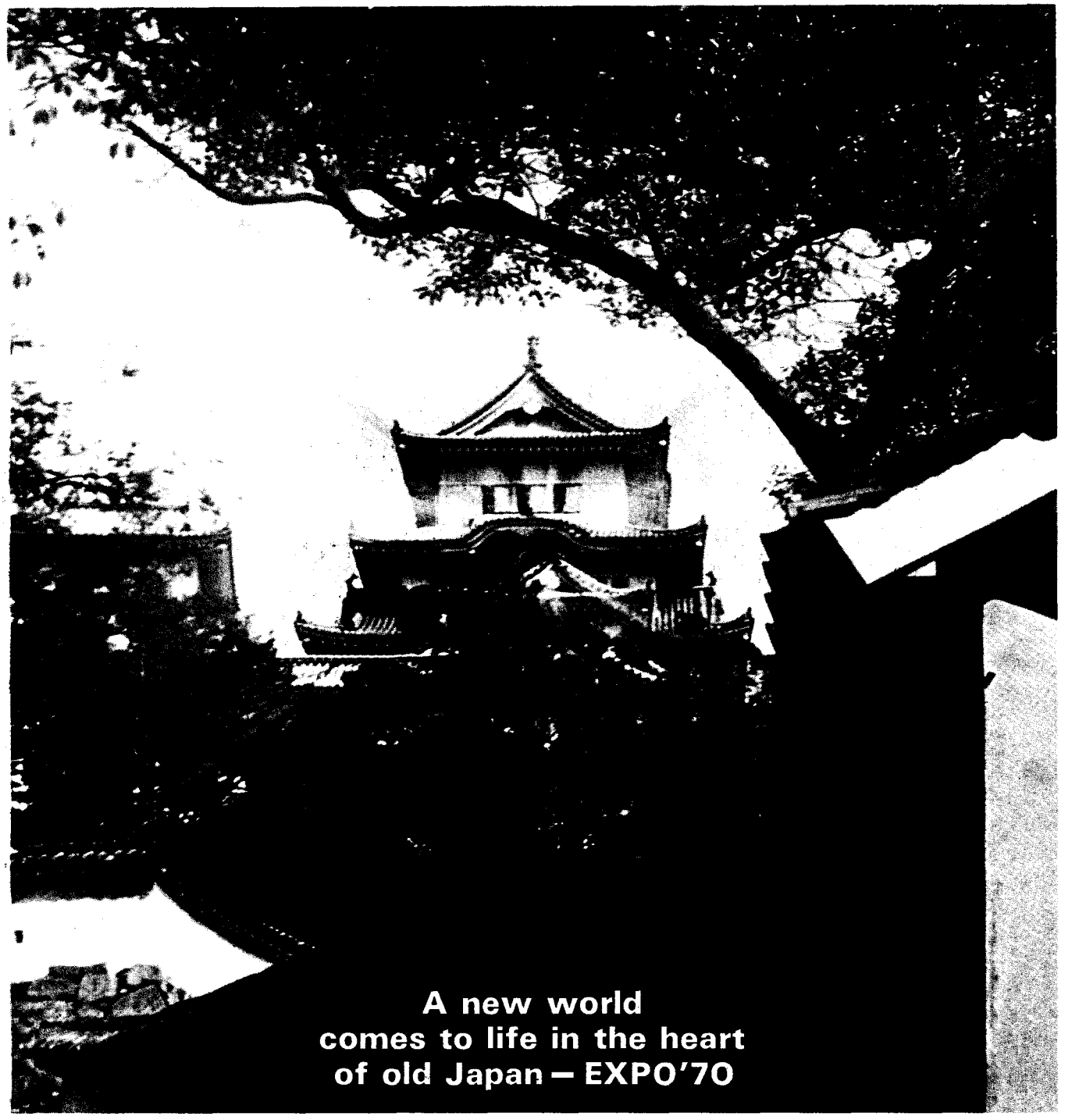

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Vietnam, the Cold War & Other Matters

The following exchange was occasioned by Lionel Abel's article, "The Position of Noam Chomsky," which appeared in our issue for May 1969. NOAM CHOMSKY *is professor of linguistics at MIT and the author of* American Power and the New Mandarins. LIONEL ABEL, *the well-known critic and playwright, teaches literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo.*

Noam Chomsky

SOME IMPORTANT issues are raised in Lionel Abel's article, only to be lost in a haze of confusion. Furthermore, my own views are distorted beyond recognition and much of what is attributed to me is pure invention. I will try at least to formulate certain issues that do merit serious discussion, and then to identify some of the misrepresentations.

Abel begins by objecting to my statement that opposition to the war in 1965 "was ten or fifteen years too late." I persist in this opinion. The proper time for active opposition to our Vietnam policies was in 1955, when the U.S. was working to subvert the Geneva agreements, or in 1951, when our support for French imperialism was explained by the State Department in these terms: ". . . the fall of Indochina . . . would be taken by many as a sign that the force of Communism is irresistible and would lead to an attitude of defeatism. . . . Communist forces there must be decisively conquered down to the last pocket of resistance." The general background was explained by Dean Acheson, who instructed a committee reassessing American policy in Asia in 1949 that: "You will please take as your assumption that it is a fundamental decision of American policy that the United States does not intend to permit further extension of Communist domination on the continent of Asia or in the Southeast Asian area. . . ." Writing on Soviet capabilities in 1951, he explained further: "It is not only the threat of direct military attack which must be considered, but also that of conquest by default, by pressure, by persuasion, by subversion, by 'neutralism.' . . ." It was then that active opposition to our Vietnam policies, and the global strategy of which they were a part, should have begun. I do not say this, as Abel believes, out of self-hatred, but rather for the reason stated in the very paragraph from which he quotes: "This is one lesson we should have learned from the tragedy of Vietnam"—a lesson we should now apply to other potential Vietnams: Greece, Brazil, and all too many others.

The most important issues that Abel raises concern the war in Vietnam and the cold war. As Abel sees the war in Vietnam, it is, very simply, a war between Saigon and Hanoi. A victory for Saigon will be a victory for "American Imperialism"; a victory for Hanoi will be a victory for "World Communism," and further, for "Asian nationalism." He thinks, nevertheless, that "the United States can accept the victory of Hanoi over Saigon, though unquestionably this is a victory of World Communism over American Imperialism." A description of the Vietnamese war in these terms is a caricature. Consider simply the American figures on outside military forces in South Vietnam: April 1965—U.S. 30,000, DRV 400; February 1966—U.S. 200,000, DRV 11,000; mid 1967—U.S. ½ million, DRV 50-60,000, the latter assessment by Sir Robert Thompson. The disparity in arms and material is of course much greater. U.S. sources estimate that through this period the DRV contribution to the insurgent forces was not greater than 20 per cent—in absolute numbers, at about the level of the South Korean and Australian forces fighting for the Americans. Senator Fulbright, using Department of Defense figures, estimated 1965 Vietcong recruitment in the South to be 160,000. And so on. This is hardly the description of a war between Saigon and Hanoi. It would be more accurate, as a first approximation, to describe it as an American war against Vietnam, with the Americans supported by an indigenous Vietnamese army (as were the French before them). Despite the grotesque distortion, Abel's conclusion is partly true: an American defeat or withdrawal will be a victory for Asian nationalism, if it occurs before the virtual destruction of Vietnam and its people.

Consider next the cold war. My views are roughly expressed by a passage that Abel quotes:

> In general, the "International Communist Conspiracy" is a perfect propaganda device to justify actions that reinforce and extend American hegemony, serving our aims just as "bourgeois influence and American scheming" serve those of Russian imperialism. In both cases there is, of course, a background of fact that gives a superficial plausibility to the fabrications of the propagandist. . . .

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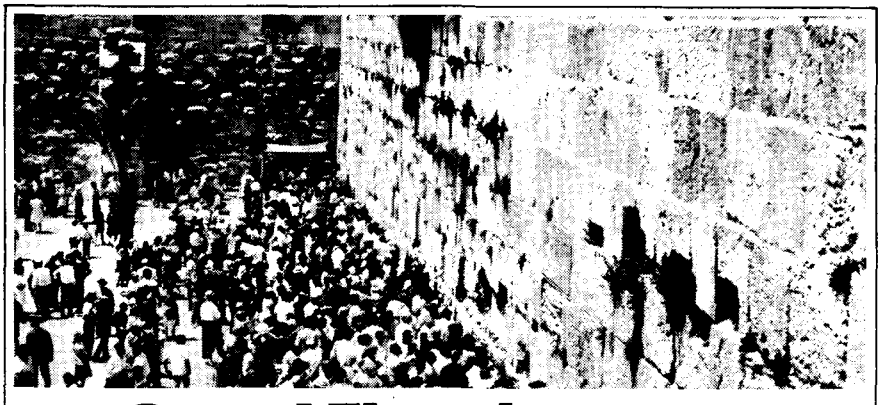
Thus I would agree with George Kennan* that the Soviet military threat to Western Europe has been grossly exaggerated, as is the Western threat used by the Russians to justify their continued domination of Eastern Europe. I recalled (following Warburg) our rejection of what appeared to be genuine Russian offers of Central European détente in 1952, and quoted Walt Rostow's characterization of the Truman-Eisenhower policy: "to avoid any serious negotiation with the Soviet Union until the West could confront Moscow with German rearmament within an organized European framework, as a *fait accompli*"—a policy which guaranteed cold-war conflict, since obviously the Soviet Union, barely a few years after the devastating German attack, could not conceivably carry out "serious negotiation," in Rostow's sense, with an organization containing a rearmed West Germany backed by the full power of the West. I also discussed our continuing pretense that China has been an international aggressor. At the same time, I pointed out that in the late 1950's, "international gangsterism was more widely distributed, with the British engaged in murderous repression in Kenya, the French fighting the last of their dirty colonial wars, and the Soviet Union consolidating its Eastern European empire with brutality and deceit." Now, however, the United States is preeminent in its use of force in international affairs. I traced American imperialism back to its 19th-century origins, and pointed out that since 1921 the Communist parties in Western Europe have served largely as an agency of Russian foreign policy, in general, a counterrevolutionary force. Speaking of the postwar era, I argued that:

> It has long been understood that there is a relation of mutual support between the American and the Russian hawks. When one side commits an atrocity, the other is encouraged to do likewise. When the militarists in one camp succeed in increasing the level of armaments, this is a shot in the arm to those who pretend to oppose but in fact support them. No doubt the American hard-liners were secretly gratified when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia, as their counterparts in the Soviet Union are pleased by our move to higher and higher levels of barbarism in Vietnam. It is also true that resisters on all sides stand in a relation of mutual support . . . they are fighting a common enemy: the militarists and managers of repression on both sides of the iron curtain. . . .

Abel's view is very different. To him, the cold war is a zero-sum game between "American Imperialism" and "World Communism" (". . . we are not entitled to conclude that the diminution of American power will have any other meaning than to increase the potentiality for barbarism of Russia and of China"). He proposes, as a general principle, that barbarism is proportional to strength, and that "we cannot help but be barbaric to those weaker than ourselves." He adds: "But if we are barbarous to the degree that we

*Cf. his *Memoirs*. At the end of the war, Kennan felt "that Moscow would have no reason to contemplate a further military advance into Europe; the danger for the West was not Russian invasion—it was the Communist parties in the Western countries themselves, plus the unreal hopes and fears the Western peoples had been taught to entertain." In the Mr. X article, he intended to present the doctrine of containment as "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat." By the end of the 1950's, he holds, "none of the Communist parties (with the possible exception of the Bulgarian and the Czech) could be considered to be . . . an instrument [of Soviet power] at all. . . . There is today no such thing as 'Communism' in the sense that there was in 1947; there are only a number of national regimes which cloak themselves in the verbal trappings of radical Marxism and follow domestic policies influenced to one degree or another by Marxian concepts." Because he felt that "the Russians had no idea of using regular military strength against us," Kennan was opposed, in the late 1940's, to a "full-fledged reciprocal military alliance." For a succinct statement of his views, see *Pacem in Terris* (edited by Edward Reed, 1965). It was for holding such views as these that Kennan was castigated by Acheson as a man who "has never, in my judgment, grasped the realities of power relationships, but takes a rather mystical attitude toward them."



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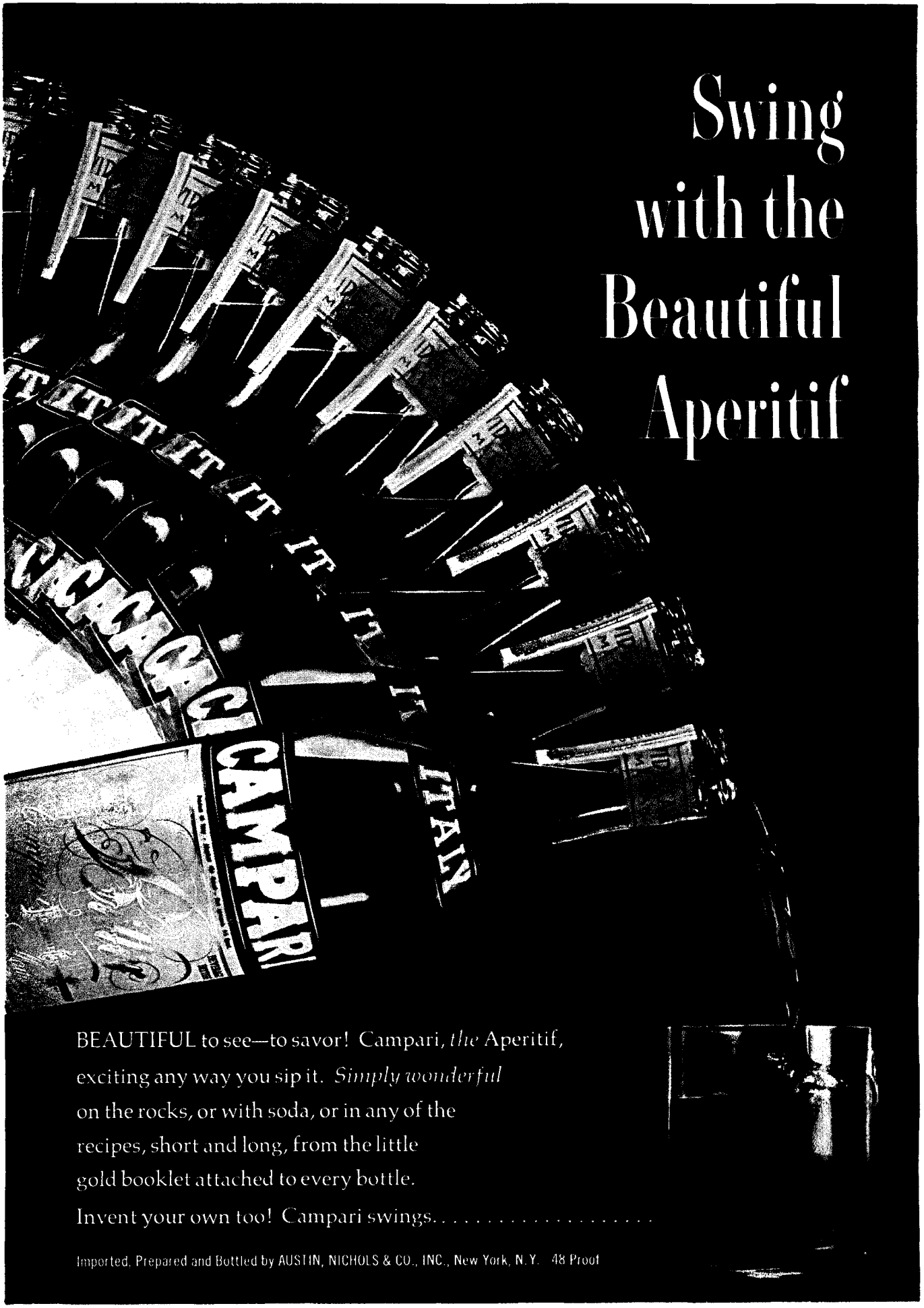
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are strong, should we try to civilize ourselves by striving to be weak? Is that reasonable? I should say not." It follows, clearly, that in his view the United States is necessarily the most barbarous power in the world, since we are the most powerful, and that we must behave accordingly. Furthermore, any decline in our barbarism would merely increase that of our "opponents."

ABEL SAYS that I have "abandoned any right to speak in the name of the truth" when I deny that we have a single opponent ("International Communism") in a "long, continuing conflict" that includes the civil war in Greece (where, Abel claims, "the agressive actions of Greek guerrillas [were] organized by the Russians"*), the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Vietnam war, subversion in the Congo, etc. My argument, he claims, would be like an argument that tried "to disprove the existence of such a thing as World Fascism" in 1938.

The analogy is fairly apt. To argue that in 1938 "World Fascism" was a single, unified opponent on a global scale would be almost as absurd as to claim, with Abel, that I abandon any right to speak in the name of the truth when I deny the existence of "International Communism" as a single, identifiable adversary in the cases just mentioned. The Rome-Berlin Axis was not regarded as firm by the West until Mussolini's attack on France (cf. Churchill's memoirs, for example). Any standard work will suffice to show the absurdity of Abel's premises with regard to Japan (e.g., Schroeder: *Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations*). With respect to the minor fascist powers, of course, the same is true, as the Germans discovered to their annoyance in the case of Spain as early as 1937. Fascist Hungary ended up as a German ally; fascist Poland, dismembered by Germany and Russia; and so on.

At least as ridiculous is the idea that we have an identifiable monolithic adversary in the "long, continuing conflict" under discussion (it was precisely this that I denied). Abel has simply abandoned reason when he accuses me of abandoning truth in this regard.

Abel arrives at the remarkable conclusion that in the conflict he perceives between American Imperialism and World Communism I stand "squarely with the Communists." More specifically, he pretends that I trace the evil we do to "the depth of our nature and history," and describe "the evils done by the Communists [as] individually motivated and . . . assessed in individual terms." Specifically, he attributes to me the "Pelagian view" that "the Kremlin made a mere mistake in judgment when it sent its armies into Czechoslovakia." The conclusion is remarkable in view of the fact that I denounce Russian imperialism in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, in East Germany (and have been involved in international protests against the Czech invasion, as participants in these continuing actions would be aware); that I have a long essay criticizing Russian counterrevolutionary policy in Spain (supported, in this case, by Western liberalism); that my critique of Bolshevism extends to

*No one has seriously maintained that Russia played a role in the events of December 1944, when the British set out to conquer the country (from the Greeks). Churchill, for one, expressed his gratitude to Stalin for his cooperative attitude. For a detailed discussion, see Gabriel Kolko's outstanding recent study, *Politics of War*. As to the civil war of 1946-49, I know of no evidence to suggest that Stalin organized the Greek guerrillas in their "aggressive" actions, or even that the Russians gave any assistance, though it is conceivable and one can cite undocumented statements to this effect. As Richard Barnet observes (in *Intervention and Revolution*), Stalin saw the Greek guerrillas "as potential clients of the Yugoslavs, whose claims to a role of independent political leadership in the Balkans he was already attempting to crush." Djilas quotes Stalin in 1948 as saying that: "The uprising in Greece has to fold up . . . must be stopped, and as quickly as possible" (*Conversations with Stalin*). Djilas suggests that fear of another independent Communist state and potential international complications "caused Stalin to be against the uprising in Greece." The available evidence indicates that Stalin never deviated from this opposition, from August 1944, when he urged the Greek Communists to join the British-sponsored Papandreou government, until the uprising was finally crushed in 1949. There is no difficulty, of course, in documenting British and American military intervention in the internal affairs of Greece.

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long before the Russian revolution; that throughout, the critique is based on principled objections to Bolshevik ideology and practice; and so on. Of all of Abel's numerous falsifications, the ones just noted are perhaps the most extreme, as can be seen by checking the references I have just indicated. They are also the most familiar. All of this is nothing but a reversion to McCarthyism of the most vulgar sort.

Abel claims that I regard American imperialism as "*solely motivated* by the desire to restructure other countries so as to find partners for the designs of American enterprise," whereas in fact I describe both American and Russian imperialism as largely motivated by factors of this general sort. I point out, as is perfectly obvious, that there is an interplay between the two imperialisms. I deny that the cold war is simply "a reaction to Communist aggressiveness," and suggest rather that our foreign policy is "very much 'a reflex of internal political forces' as well as of economic institutions" and their perceived needs.

Contrary to Abel's fantasies, when I hold the United States responsible for its imperialist ventures in the Caribbean and the Philippines, for the intervention in Vietnam, for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is not because I am "of the Orthodox party," but because I am of the party that insists that grass is green. When I deny that the Greek uprising, troubles in the Congo, the Vietnam war, and so on, emanate from the same source—"World Communism"—I am not "a Pelagian," but again, simply of the party that insists that grass is green. The same is true when I trace Bolshevik elitism to its pre-revolutionary sources, and when I discuss Soviet policy in Spain, for example, in terms of the needs of a totalitarian state desperately trying to forge an anti-Hitler alliance with the Western democracies, or when I discuss contemporary Russian imperialism in the context of the cold war. Again, all of this is obvious enough, when Abel's confusions and misrepresentations are eliminated.

ABEL SEEMS to regard political discussion as a kind of duel in which each participant tries to score points by finding errors that his adversary has committed. Conceivably, there are people who engage in this fool's game, but I want to dissociate myself from it as clearly as I can. The problems we face are too severe for such childish nonsense. A serious person will be happy to discover and correct his mistakes, and will try to obtain a better understanding of problems which, if we remain incompetent to deal with them, will surely cause death and disaster for millions and perhaps a final cataclysm that will end industrial civilization. It is fantastic to speak of one antagonist as "brilliantly reversing the defeat inflicted on him" by his opponent when he discovers a mistake that his "opponent" has made—and when international affairs are described in these terms, as when Abel speaks of Kennedy's brilliant reversal of "his defeat in the Bay of Pigs with victory in the Cuban missile crisis," one can react only with pity and despair. I tried to make this clear throughout. Let me now reemphasize the point. In reviewing Schlesinger's *Bitter Heritage*, I did cite false statements (for example, his claim that "Hanoi has put such stress on the withdrawal of American troops as a condition precedent to negotiation"—a complete perversion of widely published DRV statements). I also mentioned historical falsifications of Rostow and others. However, I emphasized throughout not errors of fact but rather positions that were honestly and sincerely put forth: for example, Schlesinger's insistence that the Bay of Pigs invasion was wrong only because the deception was unlikely to succeed, and the hopes he shares with Joseph Alsop for an American victory in Vietnam, where our policies, as he observes, are turning the country into "a land of ruin and wreck"—his willingness to applaud the "wisdom and statesmanship" of our leaders if, contrary to his expecta-

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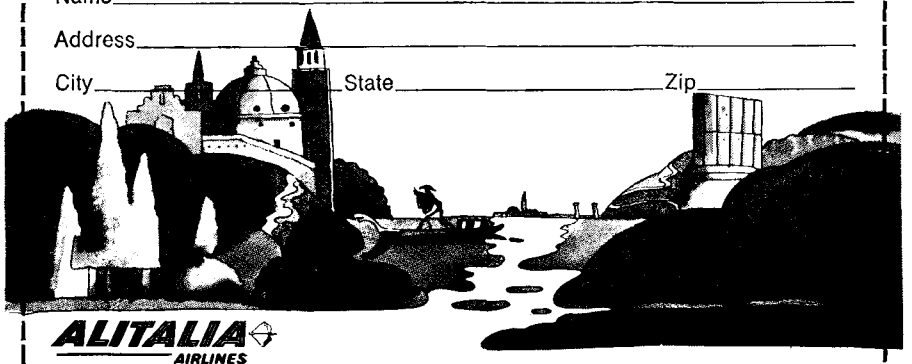

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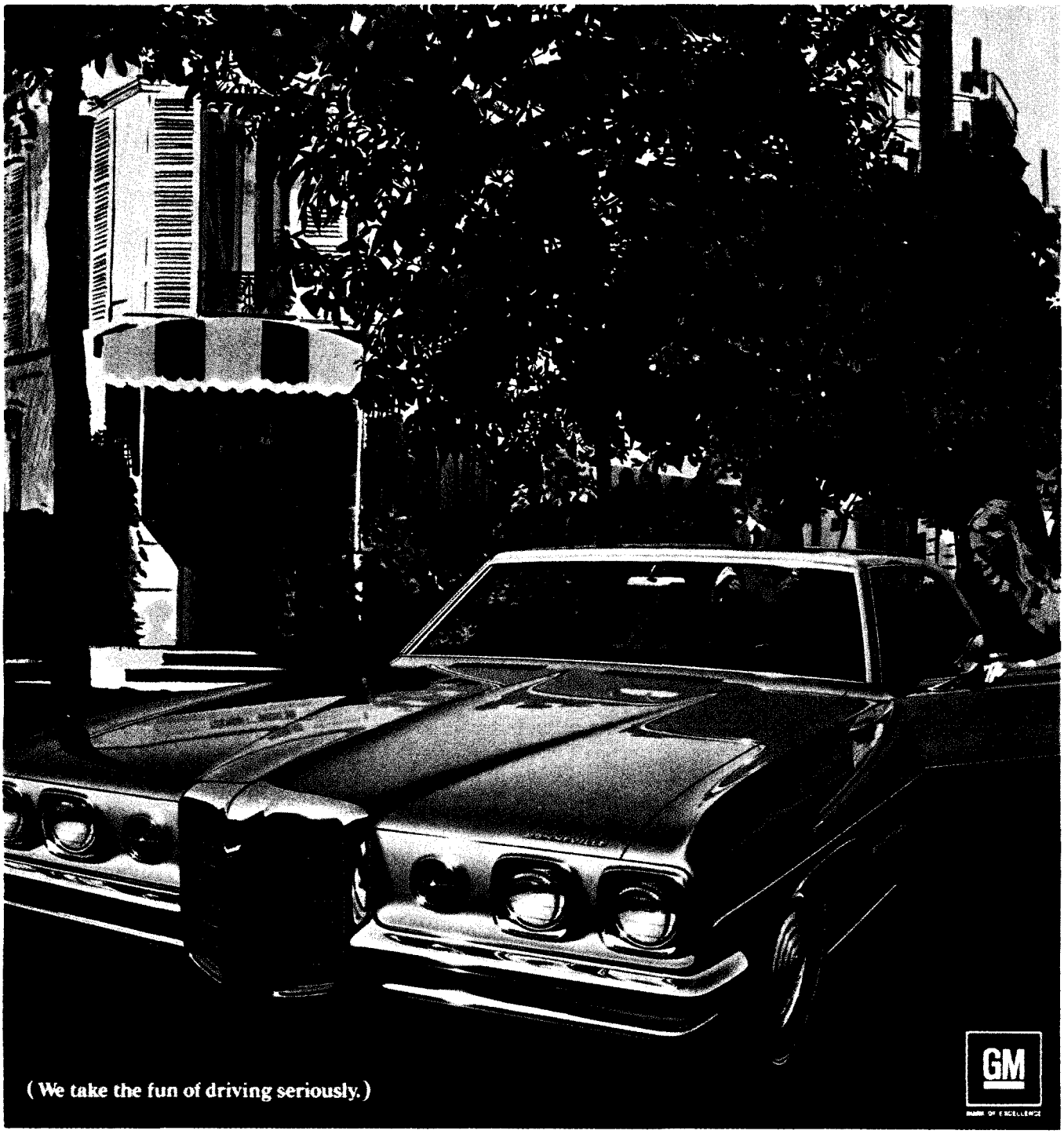

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tions, these policies succeed. Similarly, I placed emphasis on Rostow's opinion that Iran is part of the "free world spectrum of defense," and his plea that we counter the "ideological threat" of China—namely, "the possibility that the Chinese Communists can prove to Asians by progress in China that Communist methods are better and faster than democratic methods"—using our unparalleled force to insure that Asian societies develop along lines that we deem appropriate. There is little interest in the discovery of mere personal failures, from which no one is free. Surely this is obvious. What I tried to do was to identify deep-seated tendencies in American ideology and to relate them to the social role of intellectuals and to American international behavior.

Abel states that I totally condemn America (in contrast with Sakharov). Again, this is a serious misrepresentation. I repeatedly point to the existence of free institutions (and our refusal to make adequate use of them to counter the violence of the State). I refer to the honesty and occasional brilliance of the press in bringing the truth about Vietnam to those who care to know, to the freedom and affluence enjoyed in particular by American intellectuals, who have "the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression." I repeatedly cite journalists, scholars, and Congressmen for their honesty and integrity, and I dedicate the book to those who stand for the best in the American tradition, "the brave young men who refuse to serve in a criminal war." At the same time I insist that the very freedom we enjoy makes our responsibility all the more grave, and our failure to meet it all the more reprehensible. I state my "personal reaction" that "what I find most terrifying is not Curtis LeMay, with his cheerful suggestion that we bomb our 'enemies' back into the Stone Age, but rather the calm disquisitions of the political scientists on just how much force will be necessary to achieve our ends, or just what form of government will be acceptable to us in Vietnam . . . the detachment and equanimity with which we view and discuss an unbearable tragedy." It seems to me that the responsibility conferred by our freedom should lead us to protest, to resistance, even to sabotage—as in the case of the Catonsville 9 and the Milwaukee 14—if this will bring a disgraceful war to a quick end, or if it will help to reverse a lunatic race to mutual annihilation, or bring about the withdrawal of American armed force wherever it serves as an agency of repression—including even American ghettos, where the police sometimes function as a kind of army of occupation. The same is true in the Soviet Union, though there the level of international violence is, as Abel notes, far lower, while domestic repression is far more extensive and severe. As I indicated in my essays, I arrive at these conclusions reluctantly; they are hardly comfortable ones. Perhaps they are wrong, but to show this it will be necessary to deal with the problems, and the texts, in a more serious way than Abel has done.

I have already mentioned Abel's postulate that we are necessarily the most barbarous power in the world, and that it is not "reasonable" for us to try to be less barbarous. Noting further his belief that moral judgments are (properly?) restricted to one's personal life, not support of national policies, we have an unpleasant picture. My own interpretation is less grim. Modern history does not support Abel's principle that barbarism is proportional to strength. There is no necessity for us to be the most barbarous nation on earth merely because we are the most powerful, nor does it seem to me that moral judgments must be restricted to one's personal life. Rather, I retain the belief expressed in the book to which Abel refers "that American power and resources and technical skills must be used to build and not to repress or to 'contain' or to destroy," and that we can work for the cultural and social changes that are necessary if this hope is to be realized, in ways that are mentioned in some of the essays that Abel mentions. If my interpretation of the dynamics of the cold war and the arms race is near the mark, then an anti-imperialist movement in the United States would be the best support for the Czechs, and an honest, open-minded, activist and deeply committed American movement that works to create a libertarian socialist society, international in scope, would be the most valuable gift that we can offer to the Sinyavskys and Daniels and Grigorenkos, to all those who are struggling, throughout the world, to attain the material and spiritual conditions of freedom.

ABEL'S MISREPRESENTATIONS and confusions extend well beyond the relatively important points that I have mentioned. Let me give a few examples. He states that "unquestionably," in my judgment, "American power in this epoch is . . . functioning as German power did under Hitler." This is pure invention. Never have I suggested that American power is "functioning" through the use of gas chambers and Nazi-style concentration camps, and although I noted that some American scholars have made proposals reminiscent of Hitler's *Ostpolitik*, I have never implied that these proposals are being carried out on a Hitlerian scale. I did draw a comparison to Japan, in some detail, but that is quite a different matter.

Continuing, Abel states that I am wrong in attributing decent motives to all war dissenters. What I actually stated, in the reference in question, was something quite different: that Irving Kristol failed to consider the possibility that dissent was so motivated.

Abel states that I am "probably justified in denying against Walt Rostow that Stalin sent guerrillas into North Vietnam in 1946" but that I am "no doubt wrong in denying against Walt Rostow and Daniel Bell that Stalin sent guerrillas into Eastern Europe." As to the latter, I have never so much as mentioned the topic. If Abel has in mind the Greek civil war, what I said was that "Rostow offers no evidence of Russian support for the Greek guerrillas," and that though it is conceivable that there was such support, the historical record, which is far from clear, suggests that Stalin observed the postwar imperialist settlement, and

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was not at all pleased with the adventurism of the guerrillas. With regard to the first reference, Abel succeeds in being wrong even where he believes that I am right. Rostow did not suggest that Stalin sent guerrillas into North Vietnam, nor did I say so. Rather, he claimed that the Vietnamese insurrection in 1946 was initiated from the Kremlin.

Abel then states that I am wrong in denying the element of inadvertence in our build-up in Vietnam, and I am wrong in something (it is unclear what) since "President Johnson had to stop raining death from the skies, and precisely because we are a democracy." The first point raises a legitimate question (I present it as such—cf. p. 298). Since Abel offers no argument, I will not pursue the matter further here. The second remark is doubly mistaken. First, the bombing did not stop; rather it was redistributed. It has actually increased in intensity since March 1968, and is now approaching the level of two Hiroshimas a week.* Second, Johnson's redistribution of the bombing resulted from the discrediting of his policies, an international financial crisis, and an increasingly ungovernable society. It no more shows *in itself* that democratic processes are functioning than did the reversal of policies and the frequent fall of governments in, say, fascist Japan.

All of these misrepresentations appear in one paragraph of Abel's article—a remarkable achievement.

In fact, Abel's citation of "errors" contains exactly one correct observation. Namely, I mistakenly attributed to Truman some remarks by D. F. Fleming and James Warburg which were their paraphrases, rather than direct quotes (to compound the error, my quotes were garbled, with "all freedoms" replacing "freedom of speech and worship" in the Fleming quote). This was a careless and inexcusable error. I am happy to have it pointed out. It is corrected, along with a few others that I have found, in later printings. Since the comments by Fleming and Warburg are accurate and perceptive, no further change was needed. Abel is wrong, incidentally, in thinking that Truman was merely making some innocuous statements about protective tariffs in this speech (an error he shares with Schlesinger† and a number of other reviewers who have, quite properly, noted the misattributed quotation). In fact, Truman argued that freedom of enterprise is one of those freedoms to be valued "even more than peace." "It must be true," he said, "that freedom of speech and worship are related to free enterprise, as history shows." In Fleming's accurate paraphrase: "He explained that freedom was more important than peace and that freedom of worship and speech were dependent on freedom of enterprise." Government interference with free enterprise is "regimentation," and we will be forced to adopt it if other nations do: "It is not the American way. It is not the way to peace." Truman expressed his belief (in Warburg's accurate paraphrase) that "the whole world should adopt the American system . . . [which could] survive in America only if it became the world system." This was, as Fleming correctly observed, an "ominous challenge," given the economic situation of 1937. I want to make clear that I do not bring up these facts to excuse my error —misidentifying a secondary source as a primary one—but rather to locate it properly.

*See I. F. Stone, "Nixon and the War Machine," *New York Review*, June 5, 1969. As Stone points out, DOD sources indicate that bombing tonnages in South Vietnam and Laos continue to be in the neighborhood of 120-130,000 tons a month. Gabriel Kolko has reviewed the level of bombing in a report to the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam, May 1969 ("Vietnam: The War and Diplomacy since January, 1968"). According to evidence that he cites from DOD sources, "tonnages dropped north of the [17th] parallel sharply increased after March 1968." Furthermore, "U.S. bomb tonnage in Southeast Asia during the first 10 months of 1968 averaged 120,000 tons a month, and from November 1968 through March 1969 it averaged 124,000 tons per month," reaching a peak of 129,000 tons a month in early 1969. Such were the unilateral steps of deescalation undertaken by the United States on April 1, after Johnson's announcement of the bombing restrictions, and November 1, when bombing was further restricted, largely, to South Vietnam and Laos. As to the largely unreported bombing in Laos, Jacques Decornoy's observations on the spot indicate that the civilian economy is a primary target (see *Le Monde*, July 1968). A detailed account of the bombing of North Vietnam after March 31, based on DRV sources and personal observation, is presented by Peter Weiss and Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss, *'Limited Bombing' in Vietnam*, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

†*Book World*, March 23, 1969. To be precise, Schlesinger is right in pointing out that the quotes are misattributed, but wrong in implying that the quotes from Fleming and Warburg failed to convey the essence of Truman's remarks. The treatment of fact in this review deserves a discussion in itself. To cite just one case, Schlesinger sees a merging of the New Left and the Old Right in the conclusion, which he attributes to me, that: "Confronted with such pressure from American imperialism, what else could Japan do but act in self-defense." To support this interpretation of my views, he cites this quotation: "It is an open question whether a more conciliatory American diplomacy that took into account some of the real problems faced by Japan might have helped. . . . It is hardly astonishing, then, that in 1937 Japan began to expand at the expense of China." The unwary reader of his review could not know that the three dots, in this quotation, cover 13 pages of text and six years of time. The first part of the quotation refers to the impact of Stimson's diplomacy of 1931 on the efforts by "the civilian government (backed by the central army authorities) to prevail over the independent initiative of the Kwantung Army" in Manchuria. The second part refers to Japanese expansion on the mainland in 1937 in response, in part, to the economic policies of "the American and British and other Western imperial systems, which quickly abandoned their lofty liberal rhetoric as soon as the shoe began to pinch." In both of these (independent) cases, I merely summarize standard sources and present conclusions that would not be surprising to a historian, though, evidently, they still come as a shock to the more fervent ideologues. Neither conclusion has anything to do with the "New Left" or the "Old Right," as can be determined by checking the references in my discussion.

Unfortunately, this example is typical of Schlesinger's inability to get the simplest facts straight. There is hardly a line of his review that does not contain some misrepresentation, invention (e.g., "the Chomsky notion that no intellectual should ever, ever collaborate with the state"), or elementary misunderstanding of modern history (e.g., Schlesinger's belief that classic colonialism invariably aimed at "territorial annexation"—five counter-examples are cited in the book he reviews: British policy in India in the late 18th century and in Egypt a century later; the opium wars; the American war against the Filipinos; the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and China—all undertaken initially with the most pious formulation of aims, specifically, renunciation of any plan for territorial annexation of the victim).

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OLA HUDSON

HOME: Laurel Canyon, California

AGE: 25

PROFESSION: Fashion designer

HOBBIES: Interpretive dancing

LAST BOOK READ: British edition of Vogue magazine

LAST ACCOMPLISHMENT: Created "Skitzo," a wildly successful, very original boutique shop on Sunset Strip

QUOTE: "I'd like to make something new happen. The Paris influence is weakening. Everything looks alike. Women need some new ways to look pretty, simple, and stylish."

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Abel feels that it is a caricature on my part when I assert that President Johnson expressed widely-held attitudes in saying that the three billion people of the world will, if might makes right, sweep over us and take what we have; or when I describe the United States as "the strongest, richest nation on earth cowering in terror behind its missiles and nuclear warheads, in fear that 'what we have' will be taken away if we allow a tiny country halfway around the world to follow its own course in freedom from American domination." No doubt he would also regard it as a caricature if I were to say that Richard Nixon expressed widely-held views when he wrote, in a letter to the New York *Times* in 1965, that "victory for the Vietcong . . . would mean ultimately the destruction of freedom of speech for all men for all time not only in Asia but in the United States as well"—similarly, Melvin Laird, when he wrote in 1962 with reference to the cold war that we are "locked in a real war, joined in mortal combat on the battlefield, each contender maneuvering for advantage." I believe that Abel is wrong in this judgment. I think he would discover his error if he were to undertake a speaking tour on the Vietnam war. I would hate to count the number of times I have heard, on such occasions, that "we have to stop them there or they'll be landing here"—said with great sincerity and feeling. Abel quotes my statement that our fears regarding a Vietnam free from American dominance, implicit in American propaganda and widely felt, is as grotesque as the belief, "thirty years ago, that a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy was threatening the survival of Germany. . . ." He interprets this as a comparison of "the Jews of Europe . . . with the people of North Vietnam," and points out that the "air defenses of Hanoi are more sophisticated than any previously employed in warfare." At this point patience really begins to fail. Quite apart from the obvious misrepresentation of what I wrote, surely no sane person could regard North Vietnamese air defenses as a threat to us.

On a related matter, Abel states that I am wrong in referring to the potential independence of North Vietnam from China (hardly original; in making these remarks, I cited Morgenthau, Gavin, Kahin, Honey, etc.). As usual, he misstates my position, attributing to me the view that "North Vietnam is a free or independent nation" with no constraints on its behavior; from the very quotes he gives, it is clear that I say nothing of the sort. Again, he presents not an argument, but a faulty analogy. I had written that "if we were really interested in containing Chinese expansionism, we should presumably be supporting Ho Chi Minh, along with all popular indigenous forces on the border of China, whatever their domestic character," instead of forcing the DRV into a relationship of partial dependence by our attack. He answers that it would be "perfectly ridiculous" to say that "by supporting . . . the Kadar and Gomulka of 1969 . . . one is containing Russian expansionism." True, but irrelevant. If the Kadar and Gomulka of 1969 were popular leaders with the range of options open to Tito or Ho, support for them would be quite consistent with a policy of "containing Russian expansionism." Even the oft-mentioned 50,000 Chinese in the DRV were in fact occupied with repairing the only rail connection between Southwestern China and the rest of China, during the period of the bombardment, if American sources can be believed.

Abel asserts that indignation blinds me to fact, and cites as an example my statement that "three times in a generation American technology has laid waste a helpless Asian country." Here Abel confuses fact with justification. Of course it is a fact that toward the end of World War II Japan was helpless to defend itself from aerial bombardment—well before Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the vile 1000-plane raid after Nagasaki. The same is true of North Korea, which was virtually leveled, contrary to Abel's amazing statement that "air power in that action played no major role."* These facts are unarguable. What can be argued is another question: whether we were right to devastate these helpless Asian nations. On Korea, I said hardly a word in the book—specifically, not the words that he puts in my mouth. On Japan I have a long essay expressing views that Abel chooses to disregard, considering instead his version of the writings of Kolko, Horowitz, and Alperovitz (the accuracy of this version I will not discuss here). This is his privilege. But he is hardly entitled to conclude from his discussion of their work that I have failed to distinguish political and moral considerations. This conclusion, obviously, could only be based on an analysis of my views, presented at length, but not so much as mentioned by Abel in the discussion leading up to this conclusion.

AFTER HAVING concluded that I write "as though these problems were nonexistent," Abel turns to my essay on the Pacific war. He feels that my stated ambivalence regarding the Pacific war is somehow contradicted by my recognition that Muste was basically correct in his forecast regarding our postwar role. There is no inconsistency. For Muste, this forecast was one reason for his pacifism; to me, its accuracy is a further reason merely for my ambivalance, which derives from unclarity as to what the consequences of alternative policies might have been. Abel takes it for granted that the only alternative to the policy we in fact pursued in the Pacific was one that would have meant the occupation of the United States by Japan and the continued sway of Japanese imperialism over Asia. This is hardly obvious. In part, Abel's conclusion follows from his fallacious notions regarding "World Fascism," which I have already mentioned. By overlooking the complexities of the real situation—discussed in part in my essay, and elsewhere in work to which I referred—he arrives at conclusions that merely reflect wartime sloganeering, and are quite unacceptable as historical analysis. It is far from clear that the European and Pacific wars were

*Bombing tonnage in that action is variously estimated at between 600,000 and 700,000 tons, a total that exceeds the tonnage expended by the allies in the Pacific theater in World War II.

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necessarily interrelated. It is, furthermore, hardly obvious that the Vietnamese, for example, would have suffered more from Japanese fascism than from American imperialism. I doubt that Japan could have used force on a scale comparable with ours to suppress national independence in Southeast Asia. As to colonization of the United States, this was beyond the wildest dreams of the Japanese military. It is not obvious that the only possible outcomes in Asia were Japanese or American domination, as Abel seems to believe. All of these are matters that I discuss in the essay that Abel disregarded. My conclusion, as stated, was ambivalence—coupled with a warning that our present policies in Asia bear a frightening resemblance to those of Japan (as Muste predicted), "both in character and in rationalization—with the fundamental difference that Japan's appeal to national interest, which was not totally without merit, becomes merely ludicrous when translated into a justification for American conquests in Asia."

Ambivalence seems to trouble Abel. For example, he cannot understand my saying that reasonable people may differ as to whether what is needed in the United States is a kind of denazification, and that it is terrifying that the question is debatable. Unfortunately, it is a debatable question. Specifically, given Abel's own interpretation of America as necessarily the world's most barbarous power, in which moral judgment is not applied to support of national policy, it is surely at least debatable. And I find it terrifying that this question is debatable, contrary to Abel's view that "whatever is debatable is not exactly terrifying." In fact, his calm assessment of the United States, which I have just repeated, is disturbing enough.

Abel also claims that, in my opinion, "one should be so indignant about the war as to be incapable of giving reasons against it." I leave it to the reader to determine whether in the book to which he refers I made no attempt to give such reasons. He also remarks on my "lack of foresight" in "not foreseeing the wide intellectual support for war dissenters," in an essay of 1966. I do not claim any particular political foresight. Nevertheless, I am afraid that I still find it appalling that opposition to the war is so limited, and support for resisters so minimal.

Abel asserts that I concede no force to our policy in Asia "because that policy has entailed the commission of war crimes." He accuses me of failing to distinguish moral from political judgments, of being interested only "in the moral indictment of our policy, and not in a political assessment of it." But elsewhere he remarks that it is my "political judgment of American power [that is] the important judgment of [the] book," and he discusses this political judgment at some length. Of these two inconsistent appraisals, it is the latter that is correct, in my opinion. Actually, I say very little about American war crimes, certainly nothing commensurate with their scale. They are cited primarily in discussion of reactions to them. Rather, I repeatedly stress my view that "there is no legitimate interest or principle to justify the use of American force in Vietnam," that we should adhere to international law and our own treaty commitments (specifically, the UN Charter) and refrain from the use of force "to direct the development of social and political institutions of our choice in that unfortunate country," and so on. Right or wrong, these are political judgments, though I would be the last to deny that they have a moral component. Similarly, my discussion of Japanese fascism and Russian imperialism involves a moral judgment for which I do not apologize, and which I tried to make explicit. Abel regards this as a failure of objectivity. My view, rather, is that a clear expression of values and moral commitment is a prerequisite for objectivity in historical and political inquiry that goes beyond the most superficial level. Thus in my critical discussion of Gabriel Jackson's important work on Spain, I have only praise for his clarity on these matters.

Similarly, I do not apologize for the emotion I tried to express, and which Abel believes to be feigned. Perhaps this is my personal failure as a writer. Perhaps I was unable to convey the emotion I feel as we turn Vietnam into a moonscape. Nevertheless, the emotion is genuine. I can only marvel at the fact that it is not universally shared, perhaps for the reason that Abel offers when he says that for most people, "moral judgment has to do with the conduct of one's personal life rather than with the support of national policies, impersonal in character." This attitude seems to me shameful, as well as extremely threatening. I am surprised that Abel does not agree, particularly in the light of his belief that barbarism is in general proportional to national strength and that we cannot help but be barbaric to those weaker than ourselves—so that "we cannot help but be" the most barbarous nation on earth. Once again, I do not share this judgment. What is remarkable is that Abel, who takes this view, should apparently feel content with the unwillingness to extend moral judgment to support of national policy.

Lionel Abel

I MUST first of all apologize to Daniel Bell who I said had "on the whole" defended our policy in Vietnam. About this, Mr. Bell has written me as follows:

> I have *never* defended American policy in Vietnam; have never written a line in support of it, on the contrary, as far back as 1965 I began to oppose the war and in 1966, engaged in activities which I documented of voicing opposition. But Chomsky, to be fair, does not name me as a supporter of the war. I am attacked for propounding a "pragmatic," "instrumental," and "technocratic" view of the society which abets those who use such analysis in support of the war. But even there, he does not make the linkage explicit. I am a New Mandarin and he lets it go at that.

Mr. Bell writes further:

> You cite Chomsky as objecting

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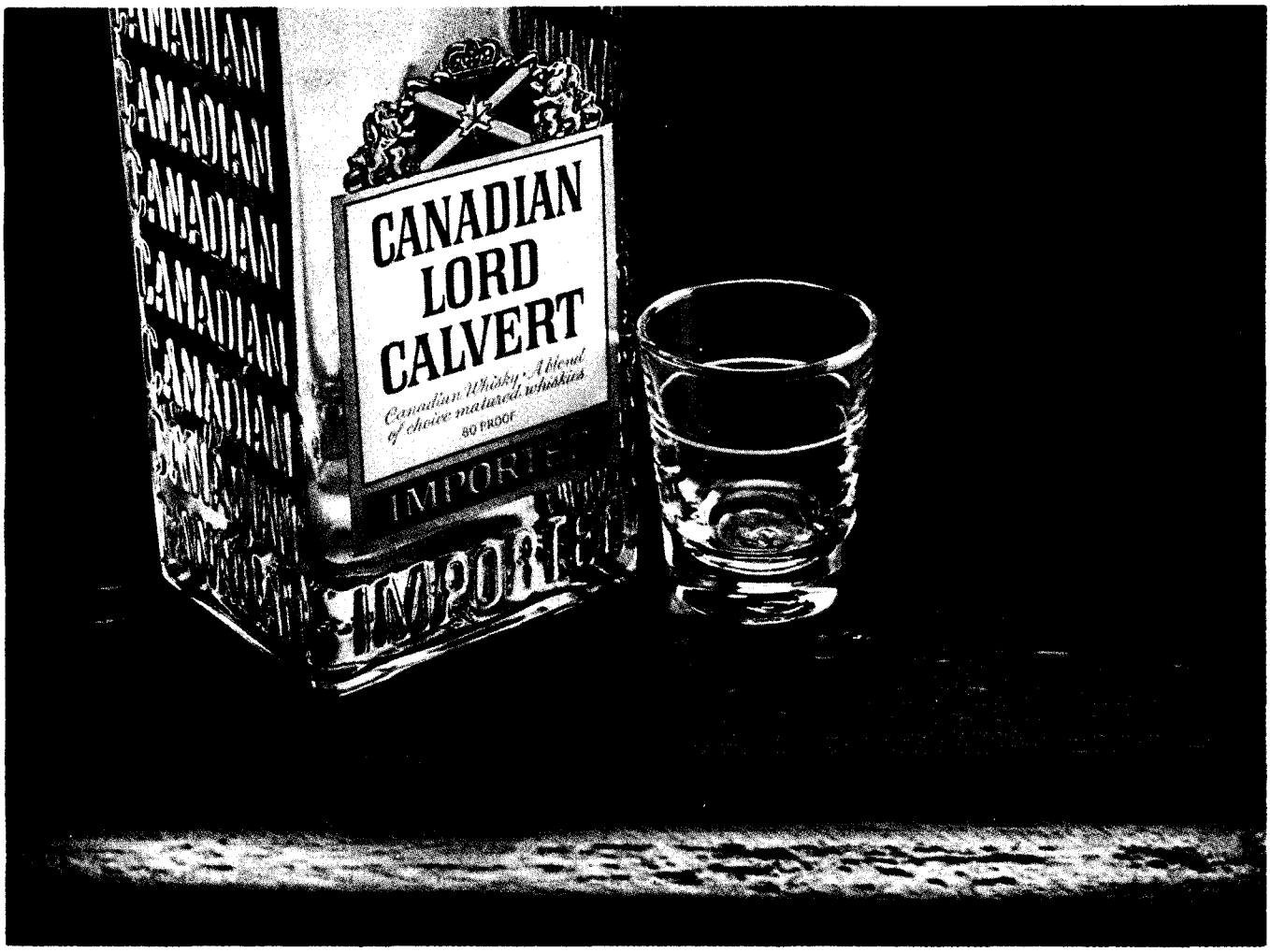

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to my description of the origin of the cold war. What is clear only if you trace down Chomsky's footnotes and sift out the bouillabaise he is cooking is that my description, so called, was written in 1950 and was mentioned, in passing, in a book on Marxian socialism in the United States in the last chapter. It never stated itself as a scholarly description, in part because few at the time had any clear sense of the origin. Be that as it may, even if my description is simple-minded and overdrawn, Chomsky should have been somewhat more explicit in setting forth the context of my statement.

I am glad to be able to present these clarifications. To be sure, Mr. Bell says that he began to oppose the war "as far back as 1965," which might mean that before then he had in some way supported it. But he is categorical in saying that he *never* defended American policy in Vietnam, and so, of course, I owe him this apology. I must add that I was not aware that Mr. Bell has actively opposed the war since 1966, and I was of course misled by the fact that Professor Chomsky criticized his views along with those of intellectuals who have indeed defended our policy. As Mr. Bell himself notes in his letter to me, perhaps I drew "... the moral which Chomsky may have wanted some to draw."

Along with the above admission of error let me note one point in my article on which I was no doubt mistaken—the point, though, is of practically transcendent unimportance. Apparently Walt Rostow merely said that in 1946 Stalin initiated insurrection in Vietnam but did not specify that Stalin had initiated insurrection in Vietnam by sending guerrillas there.

ON THE much more important matter of President Johnson's modification of our bombing policy in Vietnam, I think Professor Chomsky wide of the mark in his "correction" of what he claims to think a double error on my part. I said in my piece that "President Johnson had to stop raining death from the skies and precisely because we are a democracy." Professor Chomsky claims that this is doubly wrong, first because the bombing did not stop, but was merely "redistributed," and second, because "Johnson's redistribution of the bombing resulted from the discrediting of his policies, an international financial crisis, and an increasingly ungovernable society. It no more shows *in itself* that democratic processes are functioning than did the reversal of policies and the frequent fall of governments in, say, fascist Japan." Now of course, if President Johnson had merely "redistributed" the bombing, and had not dramatically restricted our bombings in the North, then his modification of our aerial policy would prove nothing whatever about democratic processes.*

In fact, however, our aerial policy was changed, and radically, last October, and the result has been a lessening of military violence even in South Vietnam. Moreover, Professor Chomsky's assertion that our bombing was merely "redistributed" hardly jibes with the negotiations now going on in Paris, and which the North Vietnamese refused to enter into until President Johnson's decision.

Here I must note one ploy of Professor Chomsky's; later I shall try to bring his whole method of arguing more fully into view. On the matter of the bombings his ploy is this: he attacks my statement that "President Johnson had to stop raining death from the skies," as if it were intended to be exact when, of course, it is not. The statement is not wrong, however—for President Johnson did stop, and had to stop, raining death from the skies on a very important part of the world, namely North Vietnam. But the formula I used is a summary one—it is not even my own. I took it, as is perfectly clear from the text, from Ithiel de Sola Pool's letter to Professor Chomsky in the *New York Review of Books*—I was trying to describe the facts in de Sola Pool's language, so as to refer both to the facts and to his text. If I were to use my own words, I would say, as I indicated before, that President Johnson ended the bombings in the North and began a process which has led to a general lessening of violence. But now as to the second question: does the step President Johnson took prove anything whatever about our democracy?

I ANSWERED this question affirmatively; Professor Chomsky disputes my answer. But his argument is, I think, a poor one, and even involves some begging of the question. For would our society have been "ungovernable" if dissenters to our government's policy had not been protected by democratic law? And what is proved by the political changes in fascist Japan to which Professor Chomsky refers? I do not think any of these changes were brought about by the demonstrations of left-wingers, anarchists, Communists, or pacifists: it was the actions of people of such persuasion which helped change our bombing policy. In general, the changes of policy made in fascist Japan during the 30's followed on assassinations carried out by fascists still more extreme than those in power. I quote from Wilfred Fleisher's *Our Enemy Japan*:

> Plots and assassinations were frequent during this period. Jinnosuke Inouye, Finance Minister in the Inukai cabinet, was shot at a political meeting, and Baron Takuma Dan, head of the powerful Mitsui business interests, was the victim of an assassin's bullet as he stepped from his car in front of his office. The fascist agitation reached its peak with the military revolt of February 26, 1936, when two divisions of troops revolted, and soldiers attempted to assassinate Premier Keisuke Okaka.
> Although the revolt was put down and eighteen officers were court-martialed and shot, it resulted actually in a further gain for army extremists. . . .

I do not know what the changes of

*It could be said that President Johnson between April and October of 1968 merely "redistributed" the bombing of the North, but this could not be said of our policy after October 1968, when all bombing of the North ceased. And this despite the one or two incidents since October for which the Defense Department claims to have an acceptable explanation. Even if these are backsliding, I would point out that backsliding has never been thought to prove that a conversion was ungenuine.

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Text

1. GENESIS [1–3]

GOD CREATES THE WORLD

IN THE BEGINNING, [1] God created [2] the heaven and the earth. [3] Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the surface of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.

And God said, "Let there be light!" [4] And there was light.

And God saw that the light was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

---

[1] IN THE BEGINNING: Our … builds a pal… architect's …

… there w…
…th day.

Midrash

[4] LET THERE BE LIGHT: First, light was created; then the world. Compare this, said our Sages, to the situation of a king who wished to build a palace while it was yet dark, and lit lanterns to work by.

But what was the source of the light which existed although there was neither sun nor moon? Rabbi Sh'muel explains: "God wrapped Himself in a white garment of holiness, and its radiance shone from one end of the world to the other."

Rabbi Eleazar, however, said, "The light on the first day was not like that of the sun, the moon and the stars which were created on the fourth day, but was so brilliant that man would have been able to see from one end of the world to the other." Why did God take this light away? "Because He foresaw the sinful generation of the deluge, and the rebellious people of the tower of Babel." When will the light be restored? "In the end of days, when all the world will be just and righteous, and man will use the gift for good."

…EES AND THE … …ird day … …d the gr…

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Teacher's Resource Book

(4) Let There Be Light—Text, p. 9

The original light which He created did not emanate from the sun; it came directly from God, from the creative power of the world. It was so bright that you might see from one end of the world to the other. Then God saw that because people had free will they might become sinful, as they were to become in the time of the deluge and Babel. Lest they abuse the gift of seeing so far, God hid that primeval light until the time when people would mature and not abuse the gifts of nature (Gen. 3:4; 11:2).

Man must develop ethically on the same level that he develops materially. If not, there is danger that the secrets he discovers might bring him not happiness but sorrow. It is not unlike giving a child a loaded gun or the world nuclear power.

MM[illegible]ARY ON THE MIDRASHIM

[illegible]ssion: pages [illegible]
[illegible]n [4] and [5]: page 4
[illegible]e book: pages 3-4

Teacher's Guide

AIM

To explore the notion that the Creation is dangerous as well as wonderful for man; that the world God has created for him is not an easy world, but one which demands much of him.

TEXT

And God said, "Let there be light!" [4] And there was light.

And God saw that the light was good . . .

Then God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, seed-bearing plants, and many kinds of fruit trees."

And it was so. The earth brought forth grass, plants that yield seed, and trees [5] bearing fruit in which was seed; . . .

APPROACH

Your students are used to hearing about the wonders of God's beneficent Creation. The two Midrashim here speak of another aspect of Creation: its dangers. To expose this aspect, we set the Midrashim side by side, helping the students see the notion of danger common to them. We then explore the actions of God and the obligations of man in relation to these dangers.

LESSON

1. Point out the two portions of text and their Midrashim. Begin by asking the students why they think the Midrashic comments were made. What do they tell us explicitly that we might miss by reading the Biblical text superficially?

a. The first Midrash, it is perfectly

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policy following these events in Japan may be said to prove other than that a dictatorship which has suffered reverses may indeed yield to change—when, that is, it has no dictator. On the other hand, totalitarian chiefs like Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini were able to continue with their past policies, despite the most terrible reverses. But in any case, how can the changes in policy in fascist Japan brought on by extremists during the 30's refute the assertion made by me that in 1968 "President Johnson had to stop raining death from the skies and precisely because we are a democracy"?

Arguing that it can, Professor Chomsky has called upon a procedure which he uses repeatedly in his answer to me, and which I have noticed he calls upon in answering others; it can only be described as one of misrepresentation. I realize, of course, that he has accused me of very much the same thing; in fact he has even employed such words as "falsification" and "invention" to describe what to him are my misstatements of statements that he made. Whether he is entitled to use such language about me, it is of course for our readers to judge. For my part, what I accuse him of is not an occasional "fall" into misrepresentation—even someone with candor might fall into that out of wishful thinking or inattention. But Professor Chomsky's misrepresentations are by no means careless; he arrives at them through the use of a technique which I here want to bring into public view. Professor Chomsky's technique is very simply to absolutize a statement of his opponent and then argue against it on the ground of its absoluteness. Thus he can misrepresent his opponent and claim at the same time to have been misrepresented.

HERE IS the evidence: Professor Chomsky argues against the view—as if it were mine—that President Johnson's modification of our bombing policy (I still claim he modified it) "... shows *in itself* that democratic processes are functioning." Where did I say any such thing? The comical fact here is that Professor Chomsky has underlined the words "in itself," thus calling attention to his having made absolute a view I saw no need to absolutize. I very much doubt whether Johnson would have modified our policy if democratic processes had not been functioning; and I think this is a fair inference, for I can hardly believe he would have changed his policy if our country had been a total prison with thought control in the universities and in the press. But I never said that if every aspect of our social life were undemocratic Johnson's change of our policy would prove this country a democracy.

Another instance. Here is Professor Chomsky on my attitude toward the war: "As Abel sees the war in Vietnam, it is, very simply, a war between Saigon and Hanoi." The words are Professor Chomsky's, not mine, and in his very next sentence he demonstrates their falseness, for what he asserts next is that according to me "A victory for Hanoi will be a victory for 'World Communism' and further, for 'Asian nationalism.' " But if that is what I think, and it should be obvious to anyone who has read my text that it is, then why in the world would I want to be understood to have said that the war in Vietnam is "very simply a war between Saigon and Hanoi"? And I certainly do not need Professor Chomsky to say for me what I have no intention of saying.

Having absolutized my description of the war, Professor Chomsky then goes on to call my description a "caricature"; also "a grotesque distortion." Why? He writes: "Consider simply the American figures on outside military forces in South Vietnam: . . . mid-1967: U.S. ½ million, DRV 50-60,000. . . . The disparity in arms and material is of course much greater . . . this is hardly a description of a war between Saigon and Hanoi." But once again, I never said that the war was "very simply" a war between Saigon and Hanoi. Here I must quote myself: "It is harder to see either North or South Vietnam as the real victor however the fighting ends." And what do the figures on outside military aid prove? It has been estimated that a successful defense in a guerrilla war of this sort requires a ten-to-one superiority in numbers, so that a half million Americans against fifty to sixty thousand North Vietnamese would tally with this estimate.* My point, here, is simply this: I do assume that the Saigon government represents some proportion of the people of South Vietnam, and I further assume this to be a sizable proportion. However, I have no figures to back this up, and it could be that I am mistaken; it could be that the Saigon government represents nothing of importance in South Vietnam save the American army. Perhaps this is true—although I do not think it true; my point is, though, that one cannot prove that this is true by the figures that Professor Chomsky presents. For the Saigon government might very well represent a sizable proportion of the people of South Vietnam and yet have needed an American army of one half million to deal with the attack from the North. The number of American troops in South Vietnam proves, to be sure, that the Saigon government is weak. But whoever denied that? So having misrepresented my description of the war and called this description "grotesque" and a "caricature," after all this the best Professor Chomsky has been able to come up with is a—but I must be careful not to speak absolutely—a next to worthless argument. And I will not accept this concession by him: "Abel's conclusion is partly true: an American defeat or withdrawal will be a victory for Asian nationalism. . . ." For in what sense is this judgment only partly true? If Professor Chomsky understands me to mean that part of the victory after America's withdrawal will fall to Asian nationalism, then he cannot say that my conclusion is only *partly* true, he has to endorse it completely. To single out the part-victor is not just to utter a part-truth.

ON THE VERY important matter of Professor Chomsky's relation to the Communists he has again doctored

*The reason for the numerical disparity has been given by Henry Kissinger, who pointed out that if you are fighting guerrillas and do not win, you lose. If the guerrillas do not lose, they win.

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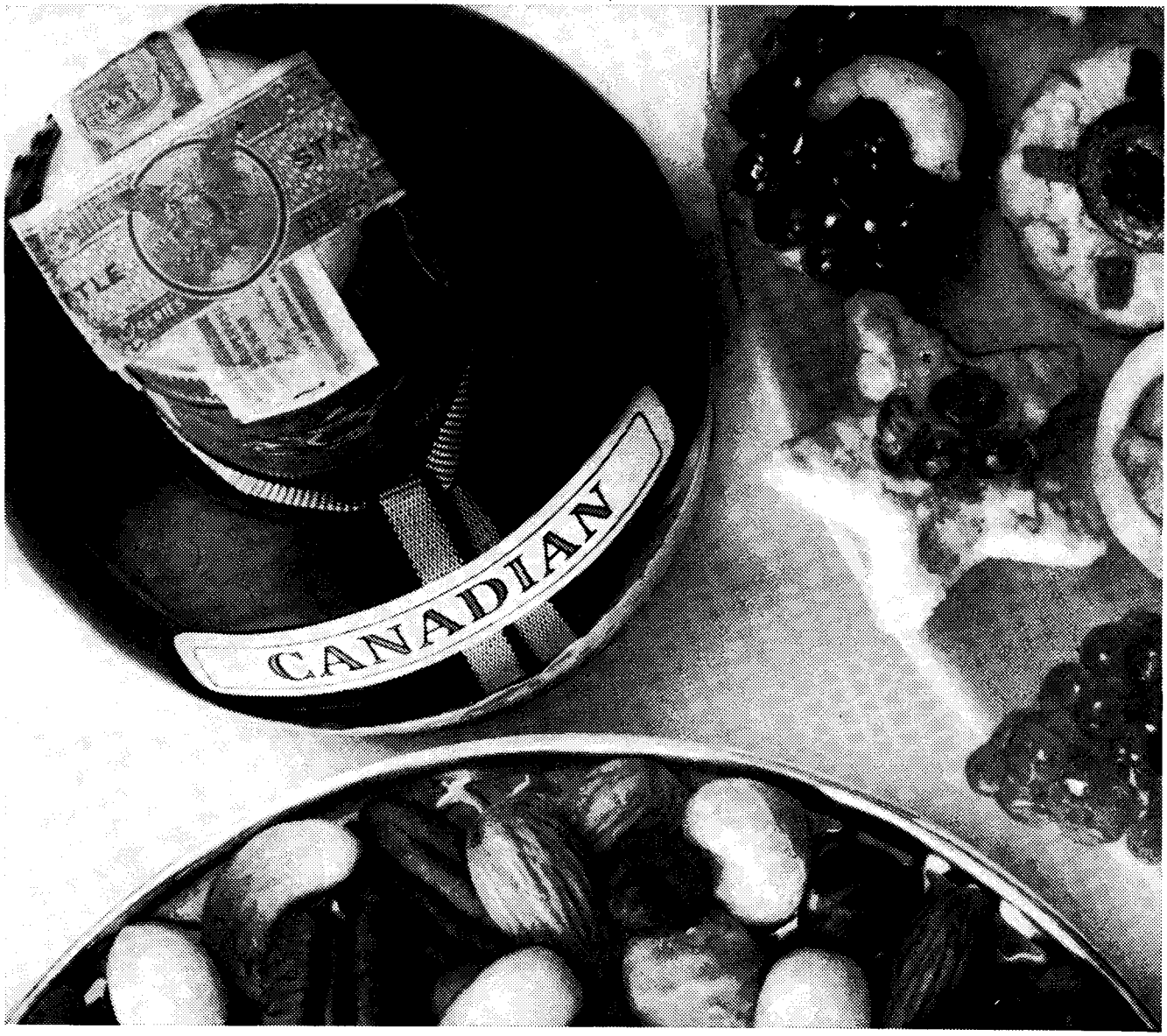

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my view so as to make it absolute. Here is Professor Chomsky: "Abel arrives at the remarkable conclusion that in the conflict he perceives between American Imperialism and World Communism I stand 'squarely with the Communists.'" Now this I did not say: I do not recognize this view as mine. I did say that Professor Chomsky "stands squarely with the Communists," but I did not say that he stands squarely with them in their political conflict with America; in fact, I have expressly denied this. I said that Professor Chomsky stands with the Communists insofar as he shares their system of justification, and I spelled this out so clearly that my meaning could hardly be mistaken. May I quote myself once more? "But if Professor Chomsky's justificatory system, as I have described it, corresponds point for point with that of the Communists, we are not to conclude from this (I do not) that he is politically with the Communists, that his position is theirs." As the reader can readily see, this statement of mine has been thoroughly falsified by Professor Chomsky, after which he was bound—that is the nature of things—to call me a falsifier. And this of course he does, immediately, and with aplomb. In the very same paragraph in which his doctored statement of my view appears, he complains of "Abel's numerous falsifications" and of my "reversion to McCarthyism of the most vulgar sort."

Afterward, though, he does state correctly one contention I made. I said that in his book he traces the evil we Americans do to the depths of our nature and history, while describing the evils done by the Communists as individually motivated and to be assessed in individual terms. All this Professor Chomsky reports correctly. But then he goes on to make absolute a judgment of mine which I made some effort to qualify. From Norman Kemp Smith's essay on the controversy between the Pelagians and the Orthodox, I quoted this description by the philosopher of the Orthodox standpoint: "Evil has a deeper source than individual misconduct"; and then went on to say ". . . certainly this last point of the Orthodox about evil sounds very much like Professor Chomsky denying the claim of Arthur Schlesinger that the United States is in Vietnam out of inadvertence; the Pelagian view would have it that the Kremlin made a mere mistake in judgment when it sent its armies into Czechoslovakia." Professor Chomsky takes all this to mean that I "specifically" attribute to him the view that the Kremlin invaded Czechoslovakia for the reason given above. Now I did not "specifically" attribute any such judgment of the Kremlin's action to him, as anyone can see from the text. Actually I am not at all sure what Professor Chomsky thinks about the invasion of Czechoslovakia. He says that he has denounced Russian imperialism ". . . in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany . . ." and that he has a long essay in his book ". . . criticizing Russian counterrevolutionary policy in Spain. . . ." But what has this to do with the matter? I have denounced American policy in Southeast Asia, but I happen to agree with Arthur Schlesinger's contention that there is an element of inadvertence to our misadventure in Vietnam. From the fact that Professor Chomsky opposes the invasion, it does not follow that he does not explain it as an error of the Kremlin's. Since I do not know how he explains the invasion I regret any inference in my text that he holds a "specific" explanation of it. But as evidence of his Pelagian outlook in interpreting Russian behavior generally I think I need only point to his own summary of what he wrote in his book on the subject of the cold war:

> I recalled (following Warburg) our rejection of what appeared to be genuine Russian offers of Central European détente in 1952, and quoted Walt Rostow's characterization of the Truman-Eisenhower policy: "to avoid any serious negotiation with the Soviet Union until the West could confront Moscow with German rearmament within an organized European framework, as a *fait accompli*"—a policy which guaranteed cold-war conflict, since obviously the Soviet Union, barely a few years after the devastating German attack, could not conceivably carry out "serious negotiation," in Rostow's sense, with an organization containing a rearmed West Germany backed by the full power of the West. . . .

It is to be noted that in 1952 the Soviet Union was a "monstrous state"—the term is Anatoly Kuznetsov's about Russia today. In 1952 Russia was the despoiler of Eastern Europe, having imposed its peculiar form of tyranny on East Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland; it was led by Stalin, the betrayer of his comrades, the murderer of Erhlich, Alter, Slansky, and Trotsky, to mention just a few of his most famous victims. Moreover Stalin in 1952 had failed to take the whole of Berlin only because of American resolve. What reason did Rostow or Truman have for thinking that the offer of a détente by Stalin was a genuine one? The fact that Warburg thought so? And why should Professor Chomsky follow Warburg? On the topic of Truman's deeds or words, Warburg, by some trick of fate, seems always to make the professor err. But my point here is that Professor Chomsky's contention that Stalin's offer was genuine is a thoroughly Pelagian one, for its argument never brings out the nature of Russia or the character of its chief, and calls attention only to the particular circumstances in which Russia found itself at that time. In a personal letter to me Professor Chomsky declares that he considers the Soviet Union to be a predatory, imperialist state. If that is what he thinks, then what does he think Rostow or Truman thought? In any case, his characterization of the Soviet Union in his letter to me never enters into his summary of the elements that "guaranteed cold-war conflict" in 1952.

SOMETIMES Professor Chomsky varies his procedure, and instead of making my views more sweeping or more general, merely makes them more detailed, and in ways which I did not. Objecting to details which he himself has introduced, he is once again able to misrepresent me while charging misrepresentation of him. For instance, I said in my piece that American power according to him is functioning in this

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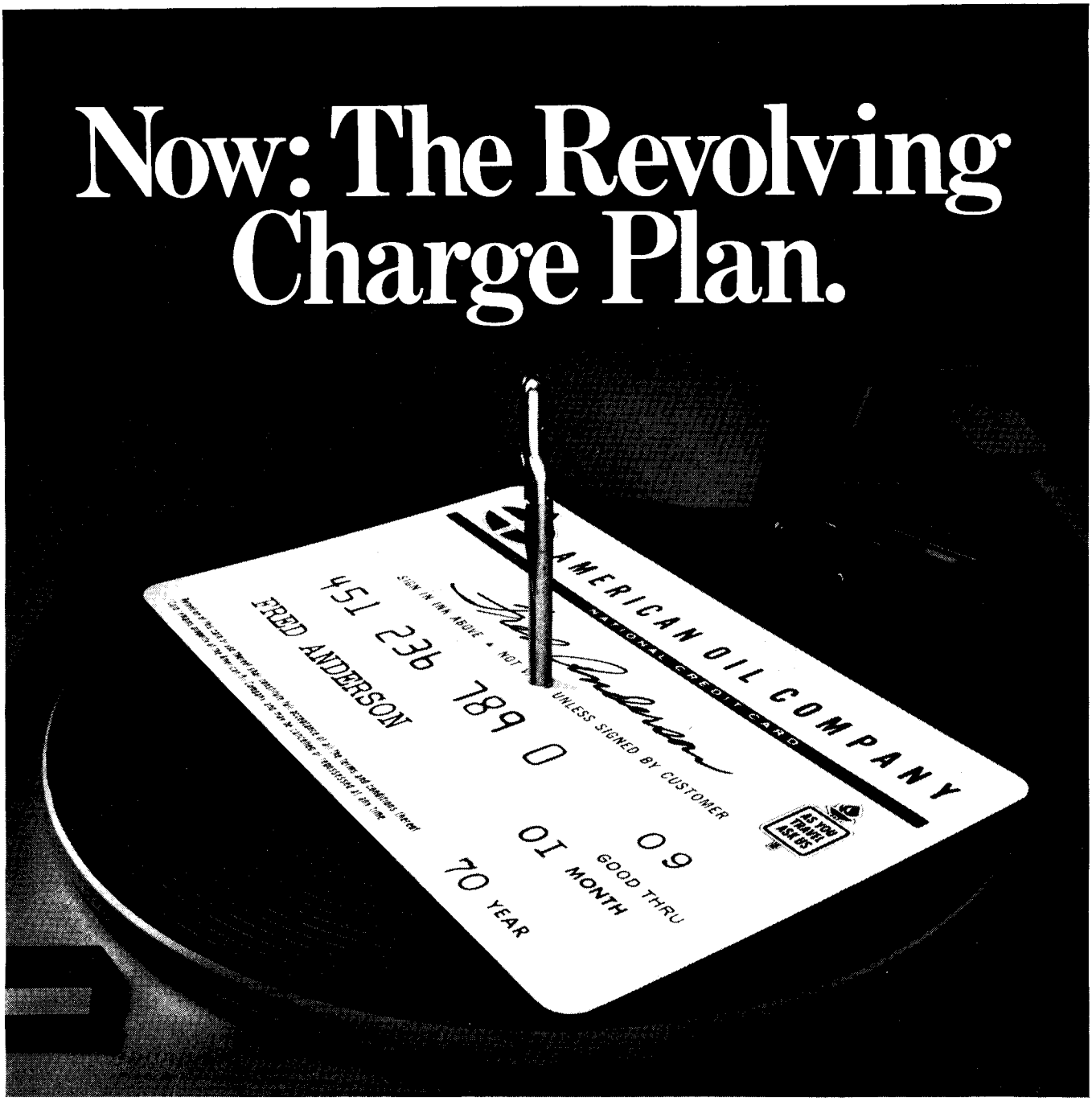

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epoch as German power did under Hitler. This, he objects, is "... pure invention. Never have I suggested that American power is functioning through the use of gas chambers and Nazi-style concentration camps." But it is he who has brought up what I did not: the gas chambers, the Nazi-style concentration camps. Now as to his view—it is at the very least implied—that American power is functioning today as German power did under Hitler: here, I think, I can refresh his memory. Taking up the political ideas put forward by A. J. Muste in 1941, Professor Chomsky writes: ". . . he foresaw that an allied victory would yield a new American empire incorporating a subservient Britain, 'that we shall be the next nation to seek world domination—in other words, to do what we condemn Hitler for trying to do.'" And Professor Chomsky follows this quotation with a remark of his own, for which he can hardly now refuse responsibility: "the accuracy of Muste's forecast unfortunately requires little comment." But if we are doing what we condemned Hitler for trying to do, is not our power being used as evilly as was German power by him? Professor Chomsky denies that he said we use Hitler's techniques: gas chambers and Nazi-style concentration camps. But why so much stress on these techniques? I take it that Professor Chomsky in judging our action in Asia is speaking as a political moralist, and not as an expert on mass-slaughter, and the judgment of his book is clearly that our acts in Asia are quite as evil as those of Hitler in Eastern Europe. I quote from Professor Chomsky's introduction to *American Power and the New Mandarins*:

> I remember reading an excellent study of Hitler's East European policies a number of years ago in a mood of grim fascination. . . . Without awareness, I found myself drawn into this morass of insane rationality—inventing arguments to counter and demolish the construction of the Bormanns and the Rosenbergs. By entering into the arena of argument and counterargument, of technical feasibility and tactics, of footnotes and citations, by accepting the presumption of legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one's humanity. This is the feeling I find almost impossible to repress when going through the motions of building a case against the American war in Vietnam.

Who will doubt after this that Professor Chomsky has placed American action in Vietnam on the same moral plane with Hitler's obscenities? Indeed, Professor Chomsky writes of the war: "it is simply an obscenity."

On the very important question as to whether there is today anything that can be properly called "World Communism," Professor Chomsky has again added a certain detail to my view so as to adapt it for refutation. On the question of World Communism, though, he does not charge me with misrepresentation, but only of asserting something "ridiculous." Let us see.

When I said there is such a thing as World Communism, I had in mind that to understand any kind of Communist party or movement we must assume it to have some supra-national content. For we cannot explain otherwise how it is that the armies of Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and East Germany were involved in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Certainly these armies did not represent the national interests of the countries from which they came. And how is it that the Communists of China are training Arab guerrillas to fight against Israel? I do not think the Red Chinese are imperialists in their attitude toward Palestine, and I do not think the Arabs they train are Chinese patriots. And how are we to explain the fact that little Cuba supports the invasion of little Czechoslovakia by a great power such as the Soviet Union? I think we have to recognize a supra-national content in Communism today, as in the movements of the Communist past, and that is why I insisted on the reality of what I called World Communism. And, similarly, with what I called World Fascism during the 30's. Without the notion of some supra-national content in the fascist movements we could not explain how it was that German and Italian soldiers fought alongside the Spanish fascists during the civil war in Spain, and we could not explain the anti-Comintern Pact or the Tripartite Alliance. I realize, of course, that it is difficult to form a very clear conception of an "international of nationalisms." Yet the fascist powers of the 1930's were impelled somehow to form something of this sort. Moreover, we must remember that after Hitler came to power in Germany, fascist political organizations were quickly formed in most countries of Europe and of South America; there were several such organizations even in our own country. With each political victory of Hitler in Europe, these organizations grew richer and more numerous. Why did Japan ally itself with Germany and Italy in September of 1940? According to Paul W. Schroeder, the "authority" whom Professor Chomsky cites, this was for purely nationalist reasons. Japan's single aim, as Schroeder sees it was "... to take advantage of the apparent German victory in Europe in order to promote her own Asiatic empire." I think this view most superficial. Certainly Germany's triumph meant to the Japanese an opportunity to work their will in Asia; but the German victory had another meaning to them too and this meaning Mr. Schroeder's thesis has required him to obscure or to ignore. The other meaning the German victory had to the Japanese in 1940 was that the political form both countries had adopted, namely fascism, was being proved a success.

To be sure, there were contradictions among the fascist groups as there are today among the Communist states and Communist groupings, and as there are no doubt among the various kinds of Asian nationalists. On the whole it seems clear to me that there is far more evidence for the existence of something in the 30's which can be called World Fascism than for the existence of something today which can be called Asian nationalism; this last, Professor Chomsky—unguardedly I think—agreed exists. The ties among all those who can be called Asian nationalists are not equally strong; evidently there are Asian nationalists in India and in Indonesia who are as ready to sacrifice South Vietnam as were the

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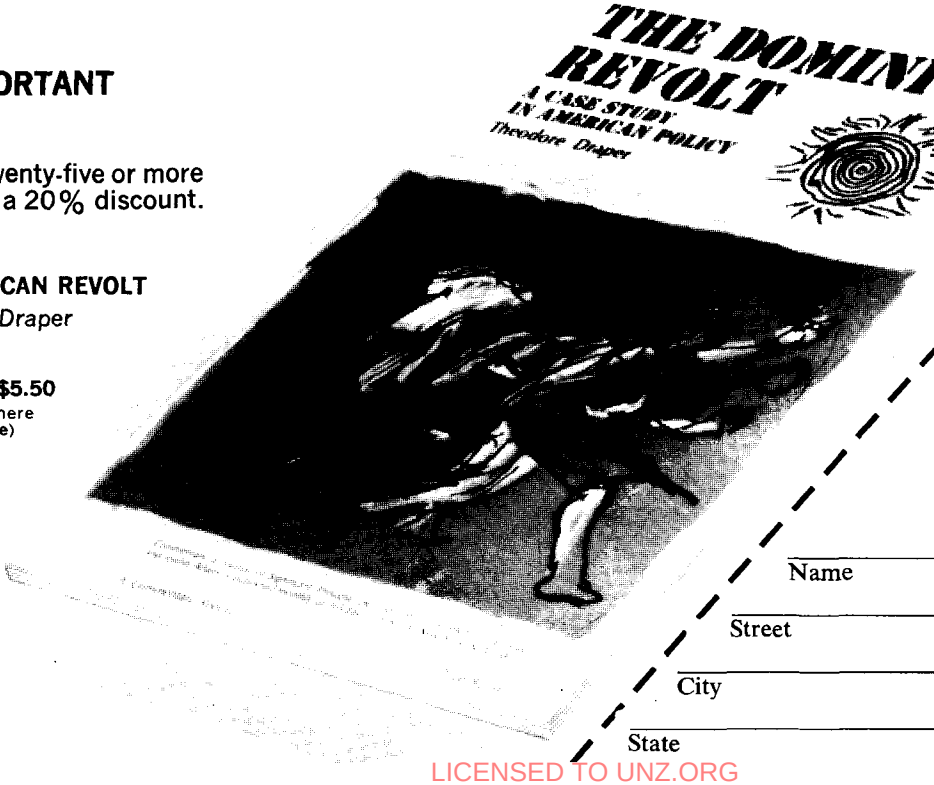

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Nazis to sacrifice Poland. Arguing against the strength of the agreements among the Axis powers, Professor Chomsky recalls the error made by Churchill in not taking seriously Mussolini's agreement with Hitler, but it is hard to believe that this argument is advanced with real conviction. For if there were some excuse for Churchill's being mistaken about the agreement with Hitler before Italy came into the war in 1940, there is surely no excuse for Professor Chomsky's making the very same error twenty-nine years after Churchill was presented with the evidence of how wrong he had been.

Is THERE such a thing today as World Communism? Against my assertion that there is, Professor Chomsky has advanced the following argument: it is ridiculous, he holds, to assert that in World Communism—the next words are his—"...we have an identifiable monolithic adversary. . . ." Now I did say that World Communism was our adversary, but I never said that it was monolithic, I never so much as used the word. What if I were to say that it is ridiculous to assert that in Asian nationalism we have an identifiable monolithic friend? Professor Chomsky would say that he had never said that Asian nationalism was monolithic, or that it has to be monolithic in order to exist. Well, World Fascism did not have to be monolithic to exist; neither does World Communism.

In disputing what I said about World Fascism, Professor Chomsky brought up Paul W. Schroeder's book, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations,* and he refers to this book as a "standard" work on the relations of the Axis powers. Now I read Mr. Schoeder's book with considerable interest, but it is certainly not a "standard" work. Reputable enough in a scholarly sense, it is the slanted presentation of a questionable hypothesis, namely that the United States could have remained at peace with Japan if it had been willing to regard China as expendable. Moreover the author's view is that the United States should have appeased the Japanese and not have opposed them on China. He scarcely tries to foresee what would have happened in Europe if Japan and the other Axis powers had not declared war against the United States. And if Americans could regard China as expendable, why should they not have regarded the Soviet Union as expendable? But there is no use asking such questions of Mr. Schroeder's book, which is quite superficial in its views, if not in its treatment of fact. However I do not want to disparage the book (it is at the very least interesting), but to indicate that the ideas expressed in it are by no means "standard" opinions about Japan and the Axis.

I charged Professor Chomsky with absolutizing my views but there is one instance in which I myself decided to speak with absoluteness. I said that Professor Chomsky condemns America, and I said that he condemns it "totally." To him this is "a serious misrepresentation." And he insists that he has praised certain things in America, certain of our journalists, scholars, congressman . . . "the brave young men who refuse to serve in a criminal war..." and the "...honesty and occasional brilliance of the press. . . ." No doubt Professor Chomsky thinks he has proved his point. He has not proved it to my satisfaction. For there are two ways of condemning something totally, and he has merely shown that he cannot be said to have condemned America in *one* of these ways. You can totally condemn something if you say that all of its parts are bad, and this Professor Chomsky has not said about America, for he has indeed praised some parts of America, one of them being our press. But there is another way of totally condemning something, while yet granting that some of its parts may be good. For you may still argue that the good parts of the thing in question do not represent it as a whole, and that its bad parts do. Now this is the line Professor Chomsky has taken on America, and this is the reason that I did not misrepresent him when I said he condemns it totally. Here is his praise of our press: "It is to the great credit of the American press that it does still provide information on the basis of which one who is willing to put in the time and effort can arrive at some understanding of what is taking place in Vietnam." However, he qualifies his praise thus: "But we must recognize that valuable as this is, it has little bearing on the state of American democracy, since the opportunity to do the research that is required to separate fact from propaganda is limted to a privileged few." So the press, according to Professor Chomsky, can hardly be said to represent the country, its life and character. Is there anything in America which does? Now in his book Professor Chomsky mentions an army exhibit in Chicago at the Museum of Science and Industry, in which visitors could simulate firing a machine gun at targets in Vietnam. The targets, according to the New York *Times* of March 18, 1968 were "... a hut, two bridges, and an ammunition dump, and a light flashed when a hit was scored." About this Professor Chomsky writes: "What can one say about a country where a museum of science in a great city can feature an exhibit in which people fire machine guns from a helicopter at Vietnamese huts, with a light flashing when a hit is scored? What can one say about a country where such an idea can be considered? You have to weep for this country. These and a thousand other examples testify to moral degeneration on such a scale that talk about the 'normal channels' of political action and protest becomes meaningless or hypocritical."

It will be seen that the free press which has been a constant of our national life does not call up for Professor Chomsky any image of the country as a whole, while the very regrettable exhibition in Chicago—a city where I am told almost anything can happen—is taken as representative of the moral degeneration not of certain Americans, but the whole of America. Perhaps after that Professor Chomsky can still say that in terms of the strictest logic he has not totally condemned America. But how can he want to say this?

PROFESSOR Chomsky's misunderstandings of my text are not always due to his contriving to make oth-

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ers misunderstand it; sometimes his misunderstanding of what I wrote is genuine. Thus I think he is truly puzzled by my having objected to the following remarks in his introduction: "We have to ask ourselves whether what is needed in the United States is dissent or denazification. The question is a debatable one. Reasonable people may differ. The fact that the question is even debatable is a terrifying thing. To me it seems that what is needed is a kind of denazification." Perhaps I did not make my objection to this sort of thing sufficiently clear in my original piece. Well, I have the time; COMMENTARY has given me the space; I will explain it to him. It is understood among people who feel an obligation to be mannerly that the following restriction must be placed on abusive language: in talking about a person—or a country—you refrain from using abusive language if the words happen to be stronger than your conviction that the abuse is deserved. Thus you do not ask another person to prove to you that he is not a scoundrel—you do not use the word scoundrel, to him or about him, unless you are sure he is that. Similarly you do not say of a country—America, in this case—that it might be nazified; you simply do not use such a term unless your conviction that you are right to use it is quite unqualified. Now Professor Chomsky has both suggested that the United States is nazified—needs denazification—and admitted that he is uncertain about the truth of this judgment. He even says that it is "debatable." Then why did he use the term? I think I can suggest an answer. The leftist youth, who have made a hero of Professor Chomsky, like to hear our government compared with Hitler's. Many times in my own classes students have asserted that this country is a thousand times worse than Hitler's Germany. Professor Chomsky, I suggest, gave the students what they wanted to hear and then, prompted by conscience, qualified his statement. He knows that America is not nazified.

I think he also misunderstood the idea of Simone Weil which I put forward that there is barbarism in power as such. "We cannot help but be barbaric to those weaker then ourselves." This idea is not one of the clichés with which Professor Chomsky feels most at home and he was ill advised to pick it up and try to use it against me. According to him the United States is the most powerful country in the world, and hence in view of what I have said about the relation of power to barbarism, have I not implied that it is the most barbarous of nations? Evidently Professor Chomsky would like to make me regret my words. I think he has not understood my point. The United States, if it exerted all of its strength, would certainly be the strongest country in the world, but it is less able to exert all of its strength than many countries which by their structure are weaker than it. The Soviet Union, for instance, is able to put behind its military technology a very much greater percentage of the energy available to it than we can of the energy available to us. Does not Professor Chomsky realize that the United States is being defeated in war, and by a small, a poor, a non-industrial nation, namely North Vietnam? Moreover, if the United States is being defeated by North Vietnam, this is due entirely to the fact—perfectly grasped by Ho Chi Minh—that because of its democratic system, the United States has been unable to suppress war dissenters. Thus if we are not strong enough to defeat North Vietnam, and we are not, one reason is that we have been unable to inflict on dissenters in this country the punishments Ho Chi Minh could inflict on dissenters in his. In fact, in view of its liberal structure, the United States cannot be said without qualification to be the most powerful country in the world. The Soviet Union was able to work its will in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia. The United States —basically because it is democratic—has been frustrated in its efforts to deal with Castro and is in the process, as I noted, of being defeated by North Vietnam. I must add here that I never once discussed the cold war in my article and I do not think of it as a game of any kind. Professor Chomsky's

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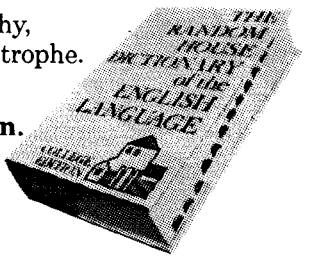

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assertion that I regard it as a "zero-sum game" is a complete invention.

FINALLY there is the question as to whether the response of Americans to the Vietnamese war has been sufficiently ethical. And on this question, too, I think Professor Chomsky's misunderstanding of my views is perfectly genuine. Well, I shall try to make myself clear to the point of platitude. I think that moral judgment relates fundamentally to individuals, and individuals, it seems to me, are not to be judged morally by their ability to change their country's foreign policy. One is not obliged to do what it is impossible to do. Now it was not within the experience of most Americans that they had the power to alter radically our government's foreign-policy decisions. Lenin, it will be remembered, thought foreign policy could only be changed by revolution. Can we call people immoral who are not prepared to revolt? For my own part, I think that the American response to the Vietnamese war has been most extraordinary. I cannot remember anything quite like it. Professor Chomsky must have found this most surprising, in view of his opinions about this country's moral degeneracy. I noted that in a lecture he gave in 1966 he did not at all foresee the resistance that was to come just two years later. In his reply to me Professor Chomsky expresses regret that he should have been so mistaken. But he thinks he was entitled to the mistake. Perhaps. But does not political judgment require first of all some grasp of the future? I must point out here that in 1962, in the pages of COMMENTARY, Professor Hans Morgenthau predicted that if we entered the Vietnamese war we would be defeated, and also that the country would be split politically. To be sure, Professor Morgenthau has also made mistakes of political judgment. His mistakes, however, are those of a man who knows this country, and who understands its policies; Professor Chomsky's, I submit, are those of a man who does not.

No doubt there are thrusts of Professor Chomsky's which I have not replied to here; and it may even be that some of these are not just minor ones. I shall have to leave them unanswered, for very frankly I am weary—my readers must by this time be weary too—of meeting his charges of misrepresentation, and of making like charges against him. It is high time, I think, to ring down the curtain on this aspect of the discussion.

Otherwise the real point of the discussion may be missed; it should have to do with something more than establishing my competency against Professor Chomsky's, or his against mine, on the topic at issue.

What is that topic?

It concerns the possibilities of radical action, and the involvement radical action may have with anti-Americanism on the one hand, anti-Communism on the other. The need and the importance of radical action were stressed by Professor Chomsky's very first statement on his feelings of guilt for not having opposed the Vietnamese war as early as 1951—when we were not yet at war in Vietnam. Daniel Bell, on the other hand, feels quite without guilt for our Asian policy, since he can show evidence of having opposed the war from 1966 on. The contrast is interesting.

For my part I find both of these attitudes equally unacceptable. Few intellectuals can claim political innocence in view of our Asian policy; but in saying this I do not mean that Professor Chomsky is right when he says that the war should have been opposed from 1951 on. I do not even know what he can mean by opposing a war which has not yet taken place. How could one agitate against the war until we had entered it? Now when was this? I should date our part in the Vietnamese war from the moment in 1962 when President Kennedy dispatched some 15,000 American troops to Southeast Asia. It is to be noted that this action by President Kennedy was opposed by Mr. George Ball, then our Under Secretary of State. So that even if the State Department may be said to have been wrong in its Far Eastern policy from 1951 on, it is not the case that even the State Department can be said to have been at war in Vietnam before 1962.

Suppose we ask this question, though: how did we get into this war in Asia? Isn't one plausible explanation for having gotten into this war the fact that there has been no effective left-wing movement in this country, not since 1948—and that without such a movement, in a country like ours, where the government is subject to so many pulls and pressures, the imperialists found their way clear to do pretty much what they had always wanted to do?

Now the reason I should say that there has been no left-wing movement in this country of any effectiveness or scope since 1948, is that the Left has never been able to repair the hurt it suffered when, just after the war, as a result of the increasing conflict between Russia and America, the coalition of liberals and Communist-party supporters split. I would be the last one to call for the unity of liberals and Communists, but I cannot deny on the other hand that this split between the liberals and Communists, which became rather absolute after 1948, marked the end of serious thought or activity by left-wing intellectuals for almost two decades. It was during this period that we had the McCarthy hearings, and the execution of the Rosenbergs; it was during this period that the Guatemalan, Cuban, and Santo Domingo actions were prepared and carried out. So if one wants to feel guilty of something, there is perhaps this to feel guilty about: nothing was done for almost twenty years to compensate politically for the loss of liberal-Communist strength.

It is not clear to me even today how the split between liberals—or let us call them independent radicals—and the Communists can be bridged. No one has ever found a way of working with the Communists other than by giving in to them, and I must note that if General de Gaulle was able to work with the French Communists and yet not give them power over him, he was able to do this only by agreeing with them as to the main enemy of France, in which role they cast the United States. American liberals and radicals are not able to resolve their difficulties with the Communists by embrac-

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ing an ideology of anti-Americanism as European intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre and politicians like de Gaulle did. Yet the obstacles American liberals and radicals found between them and the Communists since 1948 still exist. So it is foolish to talk, as Professor Chomsky does, of helping the people of Czechoslovakia by creating a left-wing movement here. Who is going to be included in this left-wing movement? The Communists? The Castroites? But the Communists and the Castroites supported Russia's invasion and support its present occupation of Czechoslovakia. . . .

We are only now beginning to feel the full effects of the absence in this country of a real Left. I do think people like myself, certainly Daniel Bell, have some responsibility for our lack of a left wing; and not just because Bell preached the end of ideology. But on the other hand, can the attitude represented by Professor Chomsky be of help in creating a left-wing movement today? Professor Chomsky's anti-Americanism is very clearly borrowed from European models, and in Europe at least anti-Americanism may have served some leftist purpose—that, for one thing, of creating some common ground between the intellectuals and the Communists. But in France and in Italy the Communists represented real numbers; in the United States they scarcely exist. Moreover Professor Chomsky's anti-Americanism strikes me as little more than a vote against the attitude of Daniel Bell, who was content to split with the Communists. Yet Professor Chomsky, for his part, will not say today that he wants to work with the Communists. Where are the forces with whom one can work if one wants to create a serious left-wing movement in America today? Wherever they are, whoever they be, they can scarcely be brought together in America as anti-Americans. The condemnation of America of which we hear so much—and to which Professor Chomsky has contributed not a little—is as politically bankrupt as is anti-Communism. If there is to be a Left in America, somebody—and very soon—will have to think of something else.

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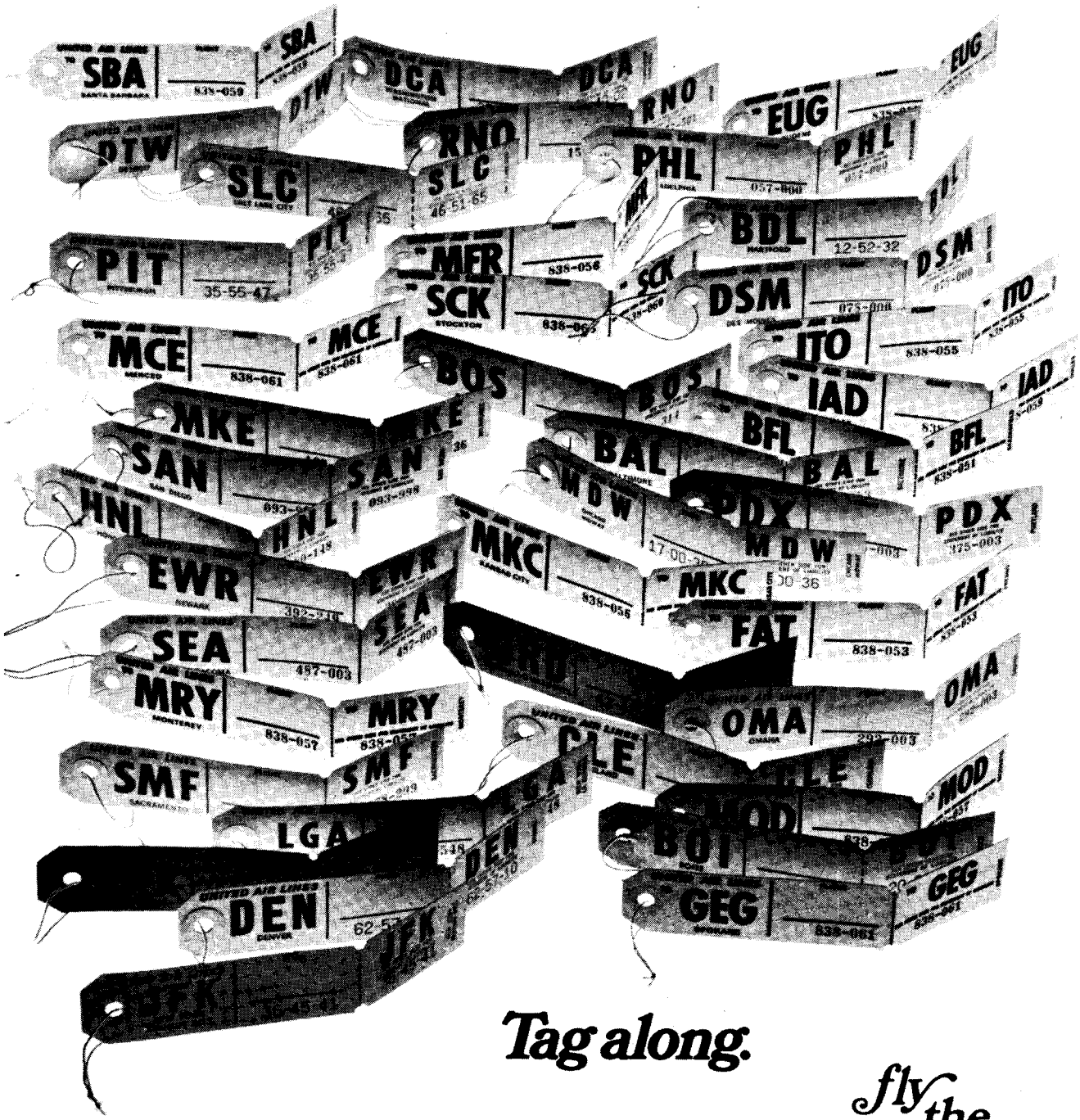

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The Decline of Liberal Politics

William Pfaff

WE CANNOT find an explanation for the decline of liberal politics in this country without questioning the relevance of the modern tradition of liberalism, and even the relevance of the Left—for this country is above all a creation of the Enlightenment and of the liberal tradition, and in the 20th century its politics and government have been dominated by the liberal Left. Our troubles today are in considerable measure troubles which we share with the liberal and socialist states of Europe.

The parties of the Left, here and abroad, today find themselves defending "the system," not attacking. The "system" is their system; they made it. Thus today they justify the status quo, the way things are done, what has been accomplished—the record. This was the campaign of Mr. Humphrey and American labor unions last fall. Prime Minister Wilson is bleakly beginning the same thing in Britain as the general election draws nearer. The socialists in France in this year's election were unable to put together a serious challenge to Gaullism, only a poor parody of the Popular Front. The socialists in West Germany have sunk themselves—without trace?—into the Grand Coalition. Why? Because the status quo, liberal or socialist welfare government, as it exists in all these countries, amounts to the fulfillment *in principle and for all practical purposes* of what the Left has sought for more than a hundred years, and the Left therefore finds itself without a coherent and convincing program—or conception—of further structural change in our society.

Thus it seems necessary to consider whether the Left, as it has existed as an intellectual and political force in recent history, may not have run its course; and whether the need today may not be for programs and innovations which in important respects contradict what the Left has come to stand for—and stand by—in the immediate affairs of this country and Western Europe.

By the Left I mean that political movement which has, since the 18th century, made it its primary purposes to extend political power to the masses of people and to bring about an egalitarian redistribution of wealth. Much else has attached itself to so huge and vivid a movement, but these two seem the distinguishing marks of the democratic Left—of the social-democratic parties of Western Europe, the contemporary Democratic party in this country, the non-party progressive and socialist movements. There obviously has been an illiberal Left as well, but I am speaking of the mainstream Left which has, however reluctantly at times, committed itself to a parliamentary system created by the liberal bourgeoisie and to a competitive political struggle which guaranteed minority interests and individual rights. That part of the Left which balked at this commitment has also, in the West, failed, and even where it has succeeded, in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, it now finds itself under internal political and intellectual pressures to adapt to this liberal political process.

In this century the liberal Left has presided over the emergence of the modern mixed economic and social system—the system of planning and welfare, of democratic government, unprecedented class mobility and egalitarian education, and, it must be added, of continued ruthless competition of interests, of constrained but unbroken profit-motivation in industry, of national wealth and power pursued at considerable cost to those individuals and groups unable or unwilling to compete. From one point of view the liberal Left may be said to have capitulated to bourgeois and capitalist values. From another, it can be said to have decisively won the struggle of values, with bourgeois society itself conceding the central values and objectives of the Left. There has not been a government in the industrialized West since 1945 which could be described as rightist or conservative in the meaning those terms bore in the past, or as rightist government still exists in the pre-liberal states of Spain, Portugal, and Greece. Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle, or even Dwight Eisenhower, might be called conservative in temperament or style, but their political programs were egalitarian and democratic. If they were conservatives, it was to conserve (rather than to extend) the system of one man, one vote, of mass affluence, classlessness, and the limiting or removal of gross and

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institutionalized discrepancies in private wealth.

Such a "success" by the Left unmistakably leaves much—"everything"—to be completed in practice. But surely it also amounts to as much of a success as any political movement ever enjoys. The Left has set the goals of modern society, it dominates the form and assumptions of modern government, dominates the political imagination and intelligence of the age.

Yet in the midst of this success, the Left today experiences rebellion on its own Left, a serious defection of its traditional voters to parties on the Right, and disorientation, conflict, among its leaders—a split over fundamental issues of program and direction. The Democrats here, Labour in Britain, the socialists on the Continent—none seems able today to agree on programs which promise more than a dull recapitulation and marginal extension of their own old policies. Last year in this country it was Mr. Humphrey who seemed the reactionary figure, the sunny New Deal optimist evading his inheritance of war and American moral crisis. The European socialists, when they are not in coalition with the center or conservative parties, have only token programs of further socialism, further nationalization; they understand that the further nationalization of industry will change little of any consequence. The younger theorists of the mainstream parties produce sensible but lifeless programs of incidental reform, refurbishings of the New Deal or Labour party or social-democratic programs of the 1930's.

Their principles almost universally conceded, their fundamental programs widely accomplished, the established parties of the Left find the public restless and resentful, critical of their achievements and of the system they have created. The young defect to romanticism and violence. The old Democratic and socialist voters prove unexpectedly vulnerable to the appeal of the bourgeois parties, to the appeal to consolidate the welfare society, to economize and retrench. These voters even prove susceptible to a Poujadist populism directed against the distant liberal and socialist leaders, the liberal "establishment."

THERE ARE endless explanations of why this reaction should take place, but the fundamental reason seems to me this: the most important political and social anxieties felt today within the industrial societies fall outside the traditional categories of the Left. They no longer are economic issues, and the tradition of the Left has been to define politics in economic and class categories. They are issues of identity and social community, recalling past conservative critiques of industrial and urban society. Thus Glen L. Tinder: while "to be free is to be separate and individual . . . liberalism has expressed and encouraged personal distinctness and individual activity as opposed to social cohesiveness. . . . [Its] central theme has certainly been the single individual, and . . . [it] has been a force making for disintegration." These new anxieties express an ambivalence about technology—the source of egalitarian affluence—and a reaction (often blind, but increasingly influential) against the centralization of authority in modern society, the anonymity of power, and—perhaps most of all—power's seeming escape from reasonable control.

For a great many individuals there is a sense of individual powerlessness in the midst of seemingly limitless material and organizational power. Nothing seems to work properly any more. Confidence in the rational control of technology and the rational organization of society is seriously weakened even among the liberal and professional intelligentsia, the very quarters which, traditionally, have held this at the core of their beliefs.

Or to put it practically, and in terms of the present American debate, good intentions have got us Vietnam.* Technology invents thermonuclear bombs, ballistic and anti-ballistic missiles. Industry makes cheap goods but wrecks the landscape and pollutes the air and rivers. Technocrats tell us that all problems are soluble, but their submarines sink at the dock and scientific administrators spill nerve gas onto grazing lands and then lie about it. Experts' programs of urban reconstruction and racial reform seem to accomplish little good, but radicalize the poor and jeopardize the security of a middle strata of white workers and civil servants who have themselves just escaped poverty and the ghettos. Bureaucracies make the system function, but meddle in private lives, humiliating the poor and annoying the rich. Medical progress underwrites a population growth which crushes our communities. Mass education produces a million yahoos, undermining high culture, and at the same time cannot teach reading and arithmetic to the slum poor. The centers of urban civilization itself, cities and the liberal universities, begin to disintegrate under these pressures. The middle classes complain that the police cannot protect them, that the garbage cannot reliably be collected or the trains kept running. The poor complain that the police are their enemies and that no one even tries to clean their streets; and even among the unpoliticized poor there appears to be a distinct rise in nihilistic social behavior.

* And Vietnam is the liberals' war. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. has objected to this statement, calling it an instance of liberal masochism. But to argue, as he does, that John Foster Dulles was a globalist or that President Nixon in the past spoke well of the war cannot alter the fact that neither Dulles nor Nixon got us into Vietnam, and the Republican administration they both served in the 1950's specifically refused to intervene there even though it was placed under heavy pressures to do so. It took a visionary liberal administration fully to translate the globalism of American rhetoric into a program of national action. Vietnam was deliberately made into a test of liberal international reform by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations—of liberal "nation-building," carried on behind a shield of Green Beret counterinsurgent warfare—against the Asian Communist "model" of radical national transformation.

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Overwrought or overstated as all of these complaints may be, they contain too much truth for comfort. They are not simply the complaints of a minority or of the intelligentsia, but increasingly are expressed by very large numbers of people. There is, additionally, moral anxiety, a sense that society has lost its moral direction and for that reason its moral authority. In this the Vietnamese war has played a crucial and devastating role for Americans because of the peculiarly close connection of political to individual moral identity in this country. Even many of those who do not believe the war itself to be immoral, or who support an interventionist American foreign policy, express distress at the moral issues of proportionate action, proportionate force—at the discrepancy of weapons, the use of B-52s against peasant guerrillas, the use of gas and napalm, at the killing of civilians and connivance at terrorism which is inherent in guerrilla wars. Combined with that other great demoralizing factor in postwar political life—the simultaneous commitment of governments to social welfare and the weapons of hyperbolic, and intrinsically irrational, modes of war—there has emerged a powerful sense of irremediable immorality in our national situation. This clearly has undermined the moral legitimacy of government; and when Steven Marcus describes even the new pornography of American popular entertainment and the arts as "a form of pseudo-radicalism" tied to the loss of moral authority of the formal structure of society, he certainly is right. Where is moral assurance or security to be found? When Minutemen cache arms and train themselves to the guerrilla defense of their families, and black students removed from the urban slums to Cornell arm themselves, both are in some degree reacting to this loss of moral security. They are arming themselves against (nameless?) dangers which political authority can no longer be relied upon to prevent. If there is no security within the political system men must act for themselves. And this is a profound sign of the breakdown of the political order.

I know that to list these anxieties, which can be summarized in familiar abstractions—anomie, "existential dread," alienation, the fear of arbitrary violence or war, powerlessness felt in the midst of anonymous power, a loss of individual connection with the centers and levers of power (or doubt that effective levers of power any longer exist; can anyone, anything, alter the momentum of events?), the rootlessness consequent upon class and social mobility—I am not exhausting the political problems of the day. To talk about armed students or nihilistic behavior in the ghettos is to deal with the periphery of a plain and tangible problem of how wealth is distributed in this wealthiest of all societies. To talk about the moral or psychological effects of the Vietnam war can be to ignore the simple and politically accountable decisions which put us into that war and could end it. I am trying to describe the mood of our society but without discounting the tangible issues. The mood seems to me increasingly hostile to the traditional remedies of the Left, while at the same time this mood is proving increasingly important as an influence on voting and as a motive for action.

Poverty is a practical, definable issue. By definition it is susceptible of economic solution in the great tradition of the Left. Yet the persistence of poverty in American society, as Nathan Glazer argued in these pages over a year ago,* no longer is really a political issue in the sense of involving a deliberate choice among coherent alternative courses of action.

There are few Americans, and no major American political movement, which will argue the necessity or inevitability of a poor proletariat in America. Few Americans will explicitly defend racial inequities, to say nothing of racial discrimination, as a matter of principle or social necessity (or inevitability). But there is a profound difficulty amounting almost to despair over *how* to make a great change in either situation. The problem is how to do what nearly everyone agrees should be done. Underlying the surface debates—guaranteed income versus black capitalism, bureaucratic reform versus community control, politicization of the poor communities versus programs of family support and social welfare—is deep uncertainty over what any of these programs can really accomplish. Whether it is justified or not—and in considerable measure it may be unjustified—there is among the public a persistent sense of the futility of such measures.

There *ought* to be a way to get income to the poor. There *ought* to be a way to get schools that work for the poor, and decent housing. This country ought, above all, to be able to build houses and reconstruct the basic social services of the city—street cleaning and garbage collection, medical service, cheap mass transportation. Whatever the present rhetoric or historical reality of institutionalized racism in this country, there is an unmistakable commitment to racial justice in government and the public today. No doubt the popular commitment is gradualist, integrative; no doubt it implicitly demands assimilation to white, middle-class values; no doubt there is plenty of residual racial hostility, as well as panicky official repressions of black radicalism. But the reality today is a community of frustration, of shared impotence.

THE SERIOUSNESS of the situation is well-enough understood, but the attempts to deal with it have divided the Left. Three classes of response can be identified, at least in American politics. There is what might (for the sake of the argument) be called reactionary reformism, there is the romantic-radical neo-Marxist

* "The New Left and Its Limits," July 1968.

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or New Left defection from liberalism, and there is the New Politics movement.

The reactionaries—they do not, of course, deserve that epithet except in its narrowest sense—hold that the old policies of the Left are sound. The American worker is not leaving the liberal voting coalition: he is being driven out by too little emphasis on the old economic issues and by irresponsible social experiments carried on by liberal intellectuals largely at the expense of the working man. A new Democratic party platform of major income redistribution, of big new taxes on business and the rich, reducing taxes on workers and pumping money into the established school system and social agencies, could calm the country and revitalize the liberal coalition. Gus Tyler has made an imposing statement of this case in a recent series of *New Leader* articles, and it seems to be substantially the position of American labor's leadership and the surviving membership of the Humphrey wing of the Democratic party.

Among the radicals are not only students but disillusioned technocratic temperaments such as Noam Chomsky, a radical optimist who might be said to have belatedly discovered sin but not original sin. In horror at the Vietnam war he has felt compelled to elaborate a general theory of a linked imperialism and liberal elitism which suppresses popular revolutions whether they appear in Europe in the 1930's or Asia in the 1960's. But popular revolution remains in his writings a suspiciously sentimental category, embracing American black nationalists, Asian peasants, and Spanish anarchists; libertarians and terrorists; campus activists and Rosa Luxemburg. Other neo-Marxists, such as Gabriel Kolko, make an easier and more traditional argument: American liberalism is simply the façade of economic imperialism. Herbert Marcuse, of course, writes off the "narcoticized" urban masses and places his confidence in a new proletariat of students and intelligentsia. He is another utopian optimist in an age whose clearest lesson has been dystopian.

But the New Left is slipping into factionalism, and while the anti-ideological wing responsible for launching the student protests remains morally most impressive, it is easy to feel sympathy for the young Maoists and Trotskyites who are attempting to take control of the students. They, at least, understand that programs and organization are essential to a serious political offensive, to say nothing of a revolution. They grasp that the New Left as a whole, born out of a reaction against the uses of power, consistently shrinks from the implications of organizing to seize and use power. There are—there can be—no Lenins among the New Left so long as the movement keeps its present character, and its present character is faithful to its sources.*

The motives of the New Left are libertarian and egalitarian; but increasingly their mood is intoxicated with violence, with the possibilities of a cleansed and purged world, a new reign of virtue. Max Beloff describes them as committed to "a mythological twilight where it can be asserted that, provided one's feelings are sincere and held with passion, the choices need not be made and Utopia can come about as a mere by-product . . . of destruction." But despite what he charges, theirs is not a fascist politics as we have known it—how consoling that would be to the beleaguered old liberals and socialists they attack!—though it is the fascist sensibility: visionary, committed to purity of feeling, anti-intellectual, anti-pragmatic.

However, the students will not take over the world, or even the universities. Their hostility to serious programs is an inherent bar to success, even if their ambition of alliance with the industrial working class were not fantasy. They trade on the inhibitions of liberal government, a wrecking tactic of great importance. The power of the weak, whether it is in Vietnam or at the university, depends upon the contradiction that the powerful will not use their ultimate means of power. But there is a penultimate threshold: the powerful can violate their avowed values and repress, jail, terrorize; the powerful can make total war. The war in Vietnam, like the war in the universities and cities, could be "won" in a way that would vindicate New Left theory while eliminating its practitioners.

By exploiting this paradox, the radicals acquire very considerable power, and their moral effect on liberal governments and the Western publics as a whole has been given a convincing demonstration over the last three years. But the movement's positive power—its power to articulate, to say nothing of calling into being, an alternative organization of modern society—is negligible. Unlike the revolutionary movements of 1789 or 1917 the new radicals have, and seemingly can have, no creative issue capable of evoking a mass response. However romantic or "unrealistic"—or ignorant—the Jacobins, they had an issue, popular sovereignty. However intolerant or naive the

* The New Left's canonization of Che Guevara is interesting in this respect. Surely he represents revolutionary death, not life—failure, not success. His Bolivian campaign was an exemplary case of sheer, and even willful, incompetence, a search not for power but for martyrdom. Poor Che!—who couldn't speak the language of the Indians he wanted to save, who lost his asthma medicine, his records, his supplies, his maps, his way, his life. The whole New Left commitment to Third World revolution is sentimental, a largely unreciprocated love-affair. Vietnamese, Algerian, Peruvian rebels have perfectly comprehensible and conventional goals: power, in order to remake national societies by "modernizing" them—which means building sophisticated economies, armies, centralized governments, recreating the conditions against which the urban rebels of New York, Paris—and Prague—are reacting. The one, whatever their illusions, deal in life and death in the real world. The others, culturally alienated rebels, would capture something of the supposed simplicity, solidarity, and austerity of the pre-industrial Third World.

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Leninists were, they proved to be supremely opportunist tacticians of power, and again they had an issue, power to the soviets. Insofar as the American radicals have a positive issue, it seems to be the abolition of power itself.

WITHIN THE liberal Left, the reformers who make up the New Politics wing of American liberalism understand organization and power but also seem fatally weak in relevant ideas. Michael Harrington,* from the socialist wing of the "established" Left has attempted to describe a way of recreating a majority party of the Left. But his program for a "conscience constituency," like other proposals of this kind, relies on a revived union movement which will be dependably liberal and militant on non-economic issues. In the past this could be the case because the overriding importance and difficulty of the economic struggle allied workers to a liberal leadership. The decline in urgency of the economic issue for organized workers, the success of the Left in breaking down class barriers and moving workers into a classless middle class, has proved a critical blow to the old alliance. As the 1968 election demonstrated, the mass of wage-earners cannot reasonably be expected to be more liberal on racial issues, or more tolerant of painful social reforms, or less chauvinist or conventionally American-messianist in their foreign policy views, than the society as a whole. Increasingly the tangible interests, the real grievances, of working men—the "forgotten men"—have pushed them in quite other directions.

Obviously, unionizing the unorganized poor could affect the political complexion of the labor movement and increase pressures for programs to help the unskilled and black proletariat. But the numbers involved are too few to offer any convincing prospect of a radically altered labor movement or a revivified liberal-labor alliance.

Nor is it clear that the growing class of suburban executives and corporate technicians will reinvigorate the American Left—even if, as Harrington says, their education has made them socially progressive rather than, as the New Left insists, merely the unquestioning technocrats of established power. What was striking about the McCarthy movement in 1968, so influential in the suburbs and among the professional intelligentsia, was its conservatism. Senator McCarthy wanted to cut Presidential power, provide cabinet officers with unprecedented authority, "liberate individuals so that they may determine their own lives." He said: "This is a good country if the President will just let it be."

As the McCarthy experience suggests, the really new elements in the New Politics seem ultimately conservative. Richard Goodwin, for example, would transfer government power to "the smallest unit consistent with the scale of the problem." But this was the core principle of the Roman Catholic Distributist movement of the pre-war years, philosophically and politically quite conservative. Theodore Lowi,† criticizing American liberalism for having institutionalized pluralist competition at the expense of those unable to compete, also wants decentralized power (as well as federal reform), strengthened regional government, and new checks on power, in part by strengthening the (essentially negative) authority of the judiciary.

Goodwin and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.** both would decentralize federal authority and the bureaucracy, end foreign interventionism, and emphasize political "participation"—especially of the black and poor communities. The last point belongs to the tradition of the Left, extending the (effective) franchise. The first two proposals surely are conservative in origin and emphasis, contradicting the centralization of power and the manipulative (foreign as well as domestic) reformism of the modern liberal tradition. States' rights and local initiative are old Republican issues. The conservatism of the New Politics foreign policy (which is the mood of the country as well) is unmistakable. "Neo-isolationism," so-called, has its intellectual roots in the pessimist-"realist" school of political philosophy, irreconcilably hostile to the progressive optimism and historicism of the traditional Left and of recent American liberalism.

But is it of any importance that the new ideas of the New Politics seem largely a disguised conservatism? Certainly it constitutes evidence bearing on the intellectual relevance of the Left. But there is a practical significance to this as well. In critical respects these new ideas contradict not only established beliefs of the Left but certain practical imperatives of liberal society as it exists today. How is economic rationality to be reconciled with a serious decentralization of economic authority? How is the administration of very large, horizontally integrated and interdependent, social groups accomplished if real power is radically decentralized? The solution surely involves a challenge to the existing priority of values in our society. The pursuit of GNP, growth, "development," and popular affluence may simply be inconsistent with the forms of social organization which people profess to want. Are the people of the big industrial states really ready to accept the consequences of what they say they want? There are formidable problems of political and economic theory as well as of political practice involved here which the publicists of the New Politics (with the honorable exceptions of Lowi and Paul Goodman) hardly have begun to

* *Toward A Democratic Left*, Macmillan, 224 pp., $5.95.
† *The End of Liberalism*, Norton, 332 pp., $6.95.
** *The Crisis of Confidence*, Houghton Mifflin, 313 pp., $5.95.

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acknowledge. Addressing simply the question of Presidential power in this country, Schlesinger ends with a strained recommendation of a weak executive in foreign policy (contra-Johnsonian) but a strong one in domestic reform (pro-Roosevelt). Pragmatism is a virtue, but a serious New Politics needs something a good deal more coherent than this.

Moreover, any retreat from the goal of popular and classless affluence undercuts the appeal which has given the Left its mass following in this century. The Left has always experienced a contradiction between the moral demands of individual autonomy and liberty, and the needs—and chiefly the economic needs—of the masses. Historically, centrally-directed social-democratic government, with all its social compromises and concessions, and Leninism have emerged as the two left-wing "solutions." Is there a third way for the Left? The Marxism "with a human face" of Eastern Europe represents the most serious contemporary attempt to find that third way, but in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia the new way seems very like the social-democratic way. It is interesting that the French New Left, in its moment of revolutionary triumph in Paris in 1968, seemed virtually to reenact the ideological history of the Left, frantically sifting through all of the old and discarded experiments of Proudhon and Kropotkin, of doctrinaire populism and anarchism, to end up either in intellectual abdication—the revolution will make itself—or confronting the hated alternatives of liberal social-democracy and Leninism.

I DO NOT mean to say that no third way can exist. I do mean to insist that America's New Politics—if this represents our search for that new way—today is being conducted as if our problems were matters of election-year tactics, whereas what are involved are fundamental questions affecting the political organization of industrial society. Any serious "new politics" must address basic structural changes in our society. And the modern Left may be quite unequal to this challenge. Its intellectual inheritance of economic determinism, of economic and class analysis, its practical commitment in modern times to centralized state power and planning, and to the centrally-administered economy, may be insurmountable handicaps. Federalism, local autonomy—these have been conservative or reactionary issues, based on a non-leftist social philosophy. The Left, historically, has committed itself to internationalism, whereas—as Gaullism recognized—the restoration of community and identity may be effectively related to the symbols and traditions of nationalism, the national community. The liberal Left has historically committed itself to parliamentary government, whose troubles today in trying to control or monitor the executive arm of government are in considerable degree the result of the growth of rationalized central authority acting by technocratic criteria. Yet people, in the attempt to reestablish their links with power, conduct a risk-filled search for charismatic leadership, for those great personalities who can speak directly to them over all the intervening apparatus of government and society, and who seek their mandates in referendums or generalized votes of confidence which are only indirectly related to programs and issues.

Thus, to make theoretical distinctions about where ideas come from, and to identify the moral and political assumptions which conservative or liberal ideas imply, may be an indispensable clearing of the intellectual ground. The vital elements in the new political thinking of this country and Western Europe may be exactly those which challenge the traditions and institutions of the established Left; and not to acknowledge this will simply add further confusion and contradiction to our politics.

If the parties of the Left today are unable to assimilate the new ideas or are incapable of responding to the new popular anxieties, can a practical response develop on today's political Right? In Europe, Tories and Gaullists seem rather more sensitive to the new situation than the parties of the Left. In this country one can only regard the rightist or avowedly conservative intelligentsia with dismay, and the Republican party with despair. While there is interest in the fact that Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a New Politics man and an iconoclast, and Henry Kissinger, a political "realist," hold office under Richard Nixon, the Republican party as a whole seems beyond redemption. Could this defiantly unintellectual businessman's party, with its instinct for the status quo and its hostility to innovation, its middle-class incomprehension of the new anxieties and dispossessed classes of American society, really make any serious response to the present situation?

It may be that for the present the best we can do is attempt to carry through the intellectual clarification of our condition. I have spoken insistently and specifically of the left-wing parties and the Left intellectuals, because the Right is negligible. The Left *is* modern politics. But it is the modern political system as much as the Left itself which is in crisis. The public's doubt of the Left is a withdrawal of confidence from the modern system as it exists today—and at a time when an alternative hardly is imaginable.

Perhaps we should abandon the language of Left and Right as a cause of confusion. Perhaps the modern Left, which began in 1789, has served its historical function, and we need a post-Left or post-liberal politics willing to deal with a radical redefinition of the relationship of individuals to power. If we have to make drastic changes in the modern system of government and economy, we may be better off if we have freed ourselves from

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the intellectual inheritance of the parties of the Left.

An Oedipal act? Without so drastic an act by those who now consider themselves men of the Left it may be that the immediate future is rather bleak. The fatal social migration, of defections from democratic politics, has already reached significant proportions, and not only among the young or a minority intelligentsia.

There is, in the United States, no real cynicism about politics. Individual identity is tied to political identity as in no other country, so that America cannot experience a political crisis that does not affect the national sense of meaning and value. To be an American is, primarily, to acknowledge a political commitment, not a national or cultural identification. This country was—the national myth has it—an empty place, where people came to make a novel political covenant among one another. We have, then, no distinction between *pays légal* and *pays réel*. Americans cannot imagine a second republic; a Frenchman can easily contemplate—or struggle to bring about—a sixth. If constitutional political order broke down here, what would Americans do? What would sustain the society? The Constitution is all. This is why the political troubles of the last three years have so shaken this country, have had so severe a moral impact upon individual Americans.

It is for this reason that political reconstruction in this country is so urgent a matter; we simply have no resources for a survival outside of politics. The new anxieties of the mass of people, having to do with their own relationship to power and their identities in the political community, could in time provoke meta-political and chiliastic responses. The least that must be said is that when the public loses faith in the competence of a government, in its ability to solve problems and do justice, and when the men who rule—as recently was the case and as may recur—lose confidence in their right to rule, or turn to a defiant or repressive defense of themselves, then the political society has begun to break down.

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The Urban Mood

James Q. Wilson & Harold R. Wilde

THE NUMEROUS mayoralty elections in big cities this year should, some argue, tell us once and for all whether the "backlash" voter now has the upper hand. His arrival has long been predicted but never fully proved. When Barry Goldwater was nominated for the Presidency in 1964, many said, "this is it." When he was crushingly defeated by Lyndon Johnson, they had to say, "well, maybe this isn't it." When Richard Nixon seemed headed to a sure Republican nomination in 1968, we were again told that "this is it." When Robert F. Kennedy at the same time was carrying white working-class precincts in Indiana and California, we again learned that "maybe this isn't it." When Carl Stokes was defeated in his first bid for the Cleveland mayoralty, his supporters assured us that it could only mean that racism was triumphant; when he won on his next try for that office, a lot less was heard about the invincibility of racism. And now with the election of Sam Yorty in Los Angeles and Charles Stenvig in Minneapolis, new grounds for apprehension have been supplied.

Or have they? To be sure, for those who wish blacks and liberals to gain power in the big cities there is little comfort to be found in the Yorty and Stenvig victories. Yorty not only defeated a Negro candidate, Thomas Bradley, but did so with a campaign described as "racist" by the moderate Los Angeles *Times,* a campaign "calculated to scare the people into voting for him." Yorty had twice previously won election by cultivating his image as "the little guy" doing battle against the "interests" (such as the LA *Times*); in 1969 he expanded his definition of the "Establishment" to include not only Communists, as in previous elections, but Black Panthers and campus militants as well—all of whom he linked with his cautious and responsible black opponent, a 20-year police veteran. In a survey taken in February, before Yorty began his fear campaign, 31.6 per cent of the respondents indicated they would not vote for Yorty "under any circumstance," while only 4.4 per cent named Bradley as a candidate they could not vote for. Yet, after being trounced in the primary, Yorty was able to win well over 60 per cent of the vote in many middle-class areas of the city, almost 60 per cent in Mexican-American areas, and almost 50 per cent in many Jewish precincts—and win the final election.

And Stenvig, while he in no sense waged a "racist" campaign, ran proudly as a law-and-order candidate, who would not "appease hoodlums," as he felt his predecessor had done in dealing with black militants and campus disorders. In a city known nationally for its "enlightened" liberalism ever since Hubert Humphrey became mayor in 1945, Stenvig was elected with 62 per cent of the vote as a straight-talking police officer. His campaign, managed by a right-wing Republican and a high-ranking police officer, received much of its publicity from a popular and conservative local "talk show" commentator. The police officer and the radio commentator, both close friends of Stenvig, were reportedly frequent visitors to his office in his first days as mayor, as he grappled with a job for which he had no previous political experience.

And of course, in New York, the defeat in the Republican primary of John Lindsay by a conservative state senator and in the Democratic primary of Herman Badillo and Robert Wagner by the conservative city comptroller seemed to many the last straw. If in New York City, that great storehouse of liberal votes and liberal money, conservatives could win, even in primaries, what hope is there for the rest of the country since (as everyone on the Upper East Side of Manhattan agrees) the remainder of the United States (with the possible exceptions of Cambridge and Berkeley) is a land of Yahoos?

In fact, there *is* a strong current of popular opinion running against some of the contemporary trends in social change. The polls show conclusively that "crime in the streets" and "Negro riots" are seen both as serious menaces and as the result, in great part, of either official softness or

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clever agitators. Though the generalized commitment to equal rights for Negroes remains strong, there is a widespread objection to black demands, especially in schools and residential neighborhoods, and a common belief that Negroes are trying to move "too fast" at the taxpayer's (somehow, always white) expense. Whether one calls these views "backlash" or "racist" depends largely on where one stands on the issues. Strictly speaking, there is nothing "racist" about opposing muggers or disliking riots or even about favoring the maintenance of the neighborhood-school concept. For example, a recent survey of the metropolitan Atlanta area shows an *equally* high percentage (55) of whites and Negroes "most concerned" about the problem of "police protection and crime prevention." (Such views become racist if they are founded on or are used to give expression to the conviction that blacks are, as a race, inferior or for other reasons ought to be kept in a subordinate social position.) But whether racist or not, there can be little doubt that the mood of the country has increasingly come to favor a slowing in the rate of social change, a reaffirmation of familial and communal values, and a stronger stance on crime and disorder.

THE QUESTION, however, is not what may be the distribution of opinion in the country but *what difference* that opinion makes in the choice of public officials and the formulation of public policy. Here, the evidence is far from clear. In many cities, including those in which Yorty and Stenvig won, the voters have given support to (or in polls have indicated they would support) candidates very different from the stereotypical law-and-order man. Congressman Don Fraser, a strong liberal whose district coincides almost exactly with the city of Minneapolis, won re-election last November by a comfortable margin against a law-and-order candidate. The black director of one of the nation's most progressive local Urban Coalitions was elected this spring in a city-wide election to one of the three vacancies on the Minneapolis school board, although Negroes make up less than 5 per cent of the population. Stenvig himself carried one of the two identifiably Negro precincts in the city, as well as the ward where the University of Minnesota is located.

In Detroit, a city that for years has seemed to be deeply divided along racial lines, with constant agitation over whether the police are "too soft" or "too tough" and who is responsible for giving them orders to "go easy" or "crack down," there is no possibility for the election of a hard-line law-and-order mayor this year. The odds-on favorite, Roman Gribbs, a white, is, although county sheriff, a moderate, well regarded in many quarters, including liberal ones. His opponent, Richard Austin, the first black CPA in the state of Michigan, is no firebrand and has served commendably on the County Board of Auditors. Although the field of 32 candidates in the primary included a number of right-wingers, the only significant conservative candidate was Councilwoman Mary Beck, running on a platform of localism, law-and-order, and opposition to the big interests (her supporters boasted that "Mary Beck's Busy Broom Brigade" would sweep the city clean of dirt and corruption). While she received strong backing from white homeowner groups, the police endorsed her more moderate opponent Gribbs, largely because of her reputation for frugality at contract time—and she got less than a quarter of the city-wide vote in the primary. The Detroit Police Officers' Association might well have supported incumbent Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, had he chosen to run, because of the way he delivered on bread-and-butter issues. And some polls show that Cavanagh would have had a fifty-fifty chance of winning this year despite the scars of the 1967 riot and his own family problems.

In Atlanta, George Wallace got over a quarter of the vote, a far higher percentage than he received in any large northern city, and yet the city has continued to follow the leadership of the widely admired Southern liberal, Mayor Ivan Allen. If he had chosen to run, Allen would easily have been re-elected, in the opinion of most Atlanta observers, even though he is the utter opposite of Wallace in every respect. And the candidates who are running are hardly virulent racists—one is a black PhD who is a member of the Board of Education; another is a liberal Jew; a third is a moderate Republican alderman who while a state legislator voted to seat militant Negro leader Julian Bond; even the law-and-order candidate stood virtually alone in the state legislature during the integration crisis of the 1950's when he voted against closing the schools.

With Negroes and Mexican-Americans making up only about 25 per cent of the registered voters in Los Angeles, and with a strong majority of the brown vote going against him, Thomas Bradley, a Negro, still was able to get almost 47 per cent of the overall final vote. He himself told an interviewer after the election, "relatively speaking, it was a great accomplishment." Six months earlier few political experts thought Bradley had a chance, even though the city had just overwhelmingly rejected conservative Max Rafferty's attempt for the Senate. Today, in Bradley's words, "We've created an attitude. People will accept a black man running for high office now as a regular thing."

THESE ANOMALIES in the "year of the backlash" may only indicate that the reaction against the compound problems of crime, riots, and black and student militancy has set in unevenly and that exceptional personalities have been able to survive the general change in the mood of the nation. Only much later, and after many more elections, will we know for certain.

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But a different conjecture seems to us at least as plausible—namely, that the American political system does not quickly or accurately mirror changes in opinion, especially at the local level, because between popular attitudes and public action (again, especially at the local level) a number of institutional and organizational factors intervene. To see urban politics as the media see them—as a "popular mood" producing a "fundamental change"—is to miss the extraordinary variety in local political systems and the complex implications of a candidacy or a policy. Just as the media were misled by their "discovery" a few years ago of the "angry black" producing a "seething ghetto" that demanded "urgent action," they are probably misled now by their "discovery" of the "indignant white workers" who intend to "fight back" because their "working-class values" have been outraged or ignored. Make no mistake—there are such persons, just as there are enraged blacks, and their possible confrontation is no pleasant prospect. Yet a vision of American urban politics that consisted solely in portraying hand-to-hand combat between these antagonists would be not only inaccurate but dangerous.

One factor that powerfully affects the ways in which attitudes get translated into political action is the nature of the local electoral system, and especially the role (if any) of the political parties. One reason why liberal congressmen can get elected from cities that are choosing conservative mayors is that congressmen run in partisan elections (that is, their party affiliation appears on the ballot next to their names); one reason why black mayors can get elected in Cleveland and Gary is that these elections are also partisan. Party loyalties change slowly; the party label carries nuances and reinforces wavering commitments long past the time when a voter may be prepared to reject any particular candidate wearing that label. In Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Detroit, and Atlanta, nonpartisan mayoral elections permit voters to express their immediate feelings more directly, while tending to limit mayoral fields either to candidates heavily financed by the "establishment" or to "protest" candidates, who, lacking party funds and party discipline, are necessarily "anti-establishment." In a city where the sense of urban growth and racial progress is predominant, as in Atlanta, this may lead to a responsible, moderate mayor, more liberal than many of his constituents. Most often, however, the nonpartisan mayoral election allows voters to express conservatism in local affairs.

And the feelings that are expressed do not simply arise out of the wellsprings of the voter's private conscience. It is reasonable to suppose that voters are aware that they are choosing a *mayor,* and not simply registering a mood; what the mayor does—indeed, what mayors generally can do—probably makes a difference. For one thing, mayors are supposed to tend to the communal and service interests of the urban electorate; not, as with congressmen, to cast a vote on large national issues or, as with a President, to embody a conception of the national interest. And though the evidence on this point is scanty, voters probably see the mayoralty in different cities in quite different terms. A person voting in Chicago, for example, probably thinks of himself as voting for a man who "is going to run the city," for that is exactly what the mayor for the last ten years or so has done. But what does a mayor in Los Angeles or Minneapolis do? By the common and repeated testimony of the incumbents of those jobs, not much. By law and charter, the highest offices in these two cities are lacking in authority; by custom and circumstance, the men holding these offices have not tried too hard to enlarge informally on their limited formal powers.

IT MAY BE important that the two law-and-order victors were chosen in cities where the mayor is weakest. The only important formal power of the Minneapolis mayor is to choose the police chief; the Los Angeles mayor cannot even do that (though he can appoint a commission that in turn will select—usually by competitive examination—the chief). The city councils in both cities are considerably more "liberal" (or at least more aligned with the traditional sources of urban activism) than their current mayor. Bradley supporters, for example, control the three most important council committee chairmanships in Los Angeles.

Though Bradley himself vigorously denied that the mayoralty need be a weak office, citing in particular the opportunity for opinion leadership, other liberals, including Arthur Naftalin, the outgoing mayor of Minneapolis, disagree. After the election, Naftalin told an interviewer that "I don't think that much will be different under Stenvig. . . . There won't be any resources available, *even for the expansion of the police force.*" Long before the election, Naftalin—a liberal with a PhD degree and wide connections among national "urbanologists"—had been speaking exactly like Yorty on this score: the mayor is "powerless" to solve the urban problems. (Of course, only Yorty, not Naftalin, was taken to task by a Senate subcommittee for such views.) The voters, we may conjecture, got the message. As one Minneapolis Democrat remarked, "Naftalin walked around for eight years saying he had no power except to appoint a police chief. The people started listening to him."

Furthermore, the "best" mayors had always emphasized the need for *federal* or *state* solutions to urban problems—massive monetary aid, new programs, progressive experiments. While there may have been good reason for this, especially if one saw "urban problems" chiefly in terms of the problems of the poor and the black, it had the effect of making it appear that the President of

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the United States ought to be the "mayor" and the Congress the "city council" for all large cities. Similarly, it had the effect of wiping out the crucial distinctions between one city and another. Mayor Naftalin was quoted at a national mayor's gathering: "Everything you read about New York, Detroit, and Chicago happens in Minneapolis also. The climate is the same." Such statements, while they may encourage more federal attention, create their own "credibility gap" in a city which 92 per cent of the residents in a recent survey rated "good" or "great." In fact, the residents of Minneapolis appear to be highly conscious (and proud) of the *uniqueness* of their political situation: their low proportion of blacks and their northern European heritage of obedience to the law, clean government, and civic participation. They don't want to be told that their city has all the problems of other cities, and they don't want to be told that they can't solve most of their own problems.

If the most urgent problems of the cities, conventionally defined, were the proper business of "Mayor Nixon" and the "City Council" in Washington, what was left for the mayors and councils of Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Detroit, and other places to do? One thing they could do was tend to the neighborhood and communal problems of the cities—street cleaning, garbage collection, and, of course, street crime. The mayors who were oriented to the national view of urban affairs did not act (in the eyes of local voters) as if they cared about these things. In fact they may have cared a great deal, but having made it clear they were powerless to do anything and having failed to focus their public statements on these matters, they seemed indifferent or impotent or both. As a result, they became vulnerable to attack by candidates who *seemed* to take these things seriously.

In every major city this year, the law-and-order candidate has also tended to be the "local" candidate. For example, a veteran Detroit reporter states: "If there's a community problem, the only councilman you see out there is Mary Beck." The publicly shrill Miss Beck can talk privately and movingly about the fate of elderly residents on fixed incomes who are assessed by the city for the removal of trees afflicted with dutch elm disease from their property. "Why don't we have a fund for that?" she asks. Though localism and law-and-order often seem to go hand-in-hand, they don't have to. The most liberal member of the Minneapolis City Council was re-elected with well over two-thirds of the vote in a ward that gave Stenvig almost four-fifths of its vote. Asked to explain the success of this man who had voted for gun control and open housing in an all-white, working-class ward (known as "little Europe" in the city), a prominent labor leader replied: "He listens to his people. If you got a problem, you can always get him." Even Sam Yorty, despite his much discussed world travels, always *appeared* to pay attention to these "local" problems, with some success. In a private poll taken in the spring of 1969, 67 per cent of those surveyed indicated a "favorable" response to Los Angeles city services. An incumbent who always acted as if he took city services and local problems seriously—a Yorty—could make much mileage out of this against a challenger who was made out to appear to be running as much for national approval and attention as for victory in the city.

Atlanta is a curious but important exception to all this. The mayor's office is weak there, too, but because of Allen's skill and his connections with the city's business community, he could make things happen anyway—even if he had to call up his business friends and get them to donate the money. (A story, perhaps apocryphal but nonetheless illustrative, concerns a recent "long, hot summer," when Allen reportedly called eight friends to get each to finance a portable swimming pool for ghetto areas. He got seven pools. The eighth person was out.) And Allen, though a national figure, has emphasized repeatedly his preoccupation with the growth and good order of Atlanta. The fact that Allen appeared to have absolutely no higher political ambitions made this local preoccupation all the more credible. Furthermore, though Allen and Naftalin, for example, spent equally large amounts of their time worrying about ghetto problems—and backed up this commitment with courageous appearances in the ghetto in the time of crisis—in Atlanta, where 45 per cent of the population is black, this struck the voters as sensible; but in Minneapolis, where only 5 per cent is black, it seemed like "coddling."

THE RESULT of nonpartisanship, of the perceived weakness of city hall, and of the national orientation of some mayors or mayoral candidates, may have been to induce voters to see the local campaign more in symbolic than in practical terms—as an opportunity to tell their mayors to "pay attention to us for a change" and as a chance to register their concern about law-and-order under circumstances that made it unlikely anything drastic would be done.

Reinforcing this tendency is the fact that, ironically, the "new politics" has really caught on. The political amateurs who began in New York and California to "take over the party" from the bottom up have succeeded in making the parties, there and elsewhere, genuinely open to grassroots influence. Students and others who organized and manned the McCarthy campaign and infused it with earnest sincerity displayed door-to-door, extended the work already begun, on behalf of very different causes, by the Goldwater enthusiasts of 1964. The "new politics" of participation, direct personal contact, and right motives is no longer the province of the reformist or intellectual elite;

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it is the style of the middle classes generally. What was once avant garde is now available at the corner drugstore. Because of this, the "new politics" no longer leads inevitably to the support of very liberal candidates. Coupled with increased Republican involvement in city politics, this development is of crucial importance in understanding whatever conservative upsurge has taken place.

Stenvig and Yorty mobilized hundreds upon hundreds of middle-class Americans to work door-to-door for them. By doing this, and doing it well, they were able to solve the problem that has beleaguered other conservative candidates—how to avoid the media-inflicted stigma of being a "racist," a "reactionary," or a "charlatan." They avoid it not by getting their volunteer army to convince strangers that such notions are wrong, but by getting those volunteers simply to call on their own friends and neighbors and say, in effect, "You know me; I'm the nice guy (or lady) next door. You and I are pretty much alike. I like Yorty. If I like him, you know he couldn't be a racist, because you know I'm not a racist. So you can vote for him with a clear conscience. You secretly want to vote for him anyway; I'm here to assure you that it's all right."

In Los Angeles, Yorty got 26 per cent of the votes in the primary after almost a nonexistent campaign. He seemed headed for oblivion. Then an organization was put together, drawing on the Republican amateurs and semipros who had just elected Barry Goldwater, Jr. to Congress; several hundred police and police-related volunteers; long-time members of neighborhood associations; and, most importantly, middle-class Republican housewives in the San Fernando Valley. Yorty appeared on television night after night to raise, subtly or bluntly, fears connected with crime, police demoralization, militants, and subversives; the volunteers, supplemented by an extensive use of personalized mailings (done by computer), fanned out to assure the people they knew that it was all right for Yorty to say this and for them to act on the basis of it. The campaign was carefully planned. The results were dramatic. In the populous San Fernando Valley, where Yorty got less than a third of the vote in the primary, he got over two thirds in the runoff. This was not a "blue-collar revolt," it was the clear choice of "respectable," solidly middle-class voters.

In Minneapolis, too, volunteers, many of them middle-aged or elderly, were important. (Stenvig workers proudly tell the story of the man with two canes who came in and asked to hand out literature. He was back the next day for more.) Although the Republican organization backed Stenvig's opponent (who had been director of "Mayors for Nixon-Agnew"), some dissident Republicans helped to organize Stenvig's effort They were joined by many newcomers to politics, as well as by people with a variety of organized political experience, ranging from leadership in anti-urban renewal groups to work in a successful anti-pornography lobby at the state legislature. The volunteers' activity on behalf of Stenvig included such innovations as mailing out campaign literature to people on their family Christmas card lists, as well as ringing doorbells. It would be a mistake, however, to see this volunteer effort as the only thing Stenvig had going for him. Equally significant were the weaknesses of the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party in the city, the weaknesses of labor itself, and the weaknesses of Stenvig's Republican opponent in the runoff. In the spring of 1968, the DFL, divided by earlier intraparty squabbles, was "captured" by youthful backers of Eugene McCarthy. For much of the year they thumbed their noses at labor, traditionally the backbone of the local party. Added to earlier divisions, the result was a weak, compromise candidate for mayor who received no labor endorsement and lost in the primary—in a normally strong DFL town.

In addition, labor itself was divided. Some of the union locals had been hit by an unprecedented turnover of business agents in the past few years, indicating rank-and-file discontent and making stable leadership virtually impossible. Labor leadership itself was split into three organizations, one of which endorsed the Republican candidate before the primary. A prominent labor and party leader stated flatly to an interviewer that, "If labor and the DFL were as strong as they once were there would have been no Stenvig." An important final aspect of Stenvig's victory was the fact that he was running against a Republican in a "nonpartisan" race, a Republican who had received President Nixon's endorsement, who was identified with "the establishment," and who refused to take Stenvig's candidacy seriously. Stenvig, an ex-DFLer running as an independent and an anti-establishment candidate, was a more palatable choice to lifelong Democrats in this strong union town. His "just plain folks" image was reinforced by the activities of his volunteers, who were quick to point out to neighbors and friends the difference between his opponent's elaborate ads on TV, in the newspapers, and on billboards all over town and "Chuck's" humble, $20,000 "people-to-people" campaign.

The Bradley campaign in Los Angeles, of course, attracted volunteers also—probably more than supported Yorty and Stenvig put together. But there was a difference: these were volunteers in the early, avant-garde sense—young, college-educated, cosmopolitan, sometimes long-haired. Above all, with the possible exception of the large group of black volunteers, they were not "locals" who could by their presence and manner reassure voters—less than 18 per cent of whom were black—that their candidate was respectable, interested in local affairs, and legitimate. Indeed, it is possible that population changes have made it

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even harder for the cosmopolitan or liberal volunteer to be as effective as he once was. The home-owning upper-middle classes have increasingly moved out of the central city and therefore the liberal but locally-known lawyer, professor, or advertising executive is increasingly concentrated in the suburbs. Except in places such as Manhattan, the central-city cosmopolitan tends more and more to be a student with no local ties and thus little local effectiveness.

To be sure, the Bradley campaign had one asset that was lacking in the Minneapolis DFL—unity. Almost all trade-union and California Democratic Council liberals were for Bradley. The otherwise bitterly quarrelsome ex-Kennedy and ex-McCarthy factions could unite, along with labor leaders, behind a black man. But apparently there is even such a thing as too much unity—one Bradley supporter complained to an interviewer of the "orgiastic euphoria" of "various dissident groups, black and white, Kennedy and McCarthy, once again holding hands." The criticism was echoed by an experienced Democratic politician who stated: "I always felt that Bradley was a better candidate than the campaign that was supporting him." The Bradley campaign suffered from a variety of ills which affect most political organizations staffed by amateurs (or at least, Democratic amateurs, who are much more inclined to "do their own thing" than more conventionally-minded Republican amateurs). Among these were an obsession with ideological purity and with adhering to the symbols of media liberalism ("law and order" was not to be mentioned in literature); fragmented, if not anarchistic control ("law and order" was used in some literature despite the prohibition); a too easy reliance on polls rather than the word from the grass-roots pros (Bradley did not dwell on his "law and order" background because it was not apparent on the basis of the polls that such moves were necessary). While such criticisms tend to obscure the virulence of the Yorty campaign, or to neglect the many successes of the Bradley effort—most notably, the well-disciplined and exceptionally high black voter turnout—they do point to some of the difficulties facing Democratic political organization in nonpartisan cities, especially now that voluntarism is the order of the day.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION in Atlanta is comparably weak, although perhaps for different reasons. The Negro who for years led the skillfull and effective Negro Voter's League is dead; the Coca Cola executive who for years worked to unite the higher echelons of the business community is now inactive; campaigns are managed by professional public-relations firms; a great deal depends on the personal skill of the mayor or would-be mayor in working out alliances, projecting the right image, and having access to business money (campaigns in Atlanta are expensive, beginning with the filing fee, which is $5000). For the past thirty years, the "white power structure" has chosen the candidate who became mayor, although that candidate has not always acted as they would have liked. For the past twenty years, Negroes have aligned themselves with the power structure's choice, in what has been described as an "unholy alliance." This year, with the first major black candidate in history, the first major Republican candidate in modern times, an exceptionally liberal Vice-Mayor under Ivan Allen, and a law-and-order candidate, both the business community and the black community may be split. But unlike other cities with weak political organization, Atlanta still seems to be on the rising curve of civic pride and optimism bolstered by a vigorous local economy and protected by a demographic pattern that has kept much of the upper middle class living within the city limits, even while many of the diehard Wallace supporters have moved out. Although 1969 may herald the decline of the traditional alliance between Bourbons and blacks, it does not appear that Atlanta will soon have to face the grim prospects of a politics of scarcity, fear, and retrenchment. That will only come when the optimism of the city falters, or the economy turns stagnant, or the affluent depart.

Detroit is already in that state, and the weakness of political organization there only makes matters worse. The business leadership of the community has never been able to revitalize the economy and of late hardly seems to be trying. Many firms have moved or are considering moving out of the city; J. L. Hudson's, the department store, has been purchased by out-of-town interests; crime is rising dramatically; and the scars of the riot are still very much apparent, psychologically as well as physically. At the focal point of the division are the police, who have been involved in a number of ugly incidents in the past few years, most notably the Algiers Motel shootings and the New Bethel Church shoot-out. The New Detroit Committee, created in the wake of the riot and affiliated with the Urban Coalition, has had some success, with the aid of the auto companies, in cutting unemployment, but has hurt its limited effectiveness by acting more as a lightning rod for the criticism of black militants than as a way-station where white and black moderates could work out common goals.

The United Auto Workers has always had a poor record insofar as Detroit elections go, partly as the result of nonpartisanship and partly also because union members seem more willing to accept the union's liberal posture on state and national issues, involving things far from home, than to accept it on local matters. Furthermore, whereas once there were many local "labor" issues, such as how the police would treat striking picketers, with the advent of national labor legislation, union

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members perceive their "labor" interests as most at stake in national elections—a fact made clear by the unions' success last year in holding down the Wallace vote (labor leaders indicate that this feat would be "impossible" to duplicate in local elections). This year the UAW has endorsed Richard Austin, the moderate black candidate for mayor, although privately union leaders give Austin little chance of winning. Austin, after Cavanagh pulled out, was the candidate closest to the UAW in his political views. However, another factor also entered in. About 40 per cent of the UAW members are black, and in the past year a small but threatening black separatist Revolutionary Union Movement has provoked a number of wildcat strikes on behalf of its demands. "Better to endorse a losing black man than a losing white man," said one UAW official.

The weaknesses of traditional political organization in Detroit and Atlanta, one might suppose, would make their mayoral politics as volatile and symbol-laden as politics in Los Angeles or Minneapolis. But one factor intervenes to complicate the comparison. In both Detroit and Atlanta, Negroes are now sufficiently numerous to make the prospect of black control of the mayoralty real. In Detroit blacks are over 40 per cent of the population, and make up at least 25 per cent of the registered voters; in Atlanta, they are 45 per cent of the population (and will be over 50 per cent in 1973 if city boundaries remain the same) and over 38 per cent of the registered voters. Race is no longer a matter of symbolic politics ("are you for or against civil rights and Negroes?") but is about to become a matter of practical politics ("Which Negro will be the man who gets the first serious crack at city hall?"). It is unlikely, though not impossible, that Horace Tate in Atlanta or Austin in Detroit could win the mayor's office; in any case, the day is not far off. It will be an uphill fight, owing to the nonpartisan system, and (in Detroit) to the low Negro registration rate; it will also be an abrasive one, owing to divisions within the black community. Bradley had no serious Negro opponent in Los Angeles, but then when he began few Negroes thought he had a serious chance of winning. Moreover, he mended fences early and had strong black support at the time he announced. Neither Tate nor Austin was the clear first choice of the many Negro factions in their respective cities and neither had done all the necessary preliminary organizing. Austin's chances were further weakened by the attempt of some of his political foes to get a tough civilian review board proposal onto the November ballot. The result was to force Austin, reluctantly, to back it early and thus hurt whatever chances he had to win white votes. (The proposal failed to collect enough signatures to get on the ballot.)

The "new politics" of Los Angeles and Minneapolis, at least as practiced by the middle classes, cannot have the same significance in Detroit or Atlanta—partly because the persons who are becoming involved in politics are different and partly because the stakes are different. As the prospects of real power draw closer, the style of black politics will change. The pattern of many different and sometimes competing "leaders" (often, only individuals who are spokesmen for points of view) engaging in rhetorical politics aimed at creating or maintaining a small constituency will give way, to some degree, to a pattern of coalition politics in which *a* candidate is chosen and supported. Already elements of this may be seen in Atlanta and Detroit, where neither candidate faced a Negro challenger of prominence even though many better-known Negroes in those towns have important political and ideological differences with the candidates. In Detroit, where most black leaders did not figure "this was the year" for a black candidate, popular outcries in the black community after the New Bethel shoot-out changed their mind. A broad coalition of Negro political leaders decided on a candidate, the black president of New Detroit, only to have him refuse to run. The more conservative and less well-known Austin stepped in to fill the breach, and black leaders found they had little choice but to get behind him (although they could, and did, force him to make gestures to the black community which might well cost him the election).

The civil-rights revolution, and later the rise of militant black nationalism, produced an explosive increase in the number and variety of black leaders unconstrained by the prospects of substantial political power (and thus substantial political responsibilities). In some large cities—Detroit and Atlanta are two, Newark is a third—the constraints will increase as the probability of winning increases. Already the moderate quality of avowed black mayoralty candidates is impressive, indicating that however great ghetto turmoil may be, many realities of urban politics have not changed fundamentally. While black mayoral candidates will not and cannot be "Toms," neither are they likely to be "extremists," representing one faction in the many-faceted black community and unable to work with white power at the local, state, or national level.

WHATEVER importance may be attached to the institutional and organizational features of urban politics, there can be no denying the importance of voter attitudes. Even here, however, the notion of a simple "backlash" against blacks or the poor or crime is too simple an account of current voting trends. In no way is this better illustrated than in the case of the Jewish voter.

When James Roosevelt ran against Mayor Yorty four years ago, the Jewish precincts of Los Angeles supported Roosevelt by majorities of 80 or 90 per cent. This year they gave Bradley only half, or slightly more, of their votes. Moreover,

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the Jewish turnout, normally far higher than any other group, was this time no more than the city-wide average. Though no exact data are available, a preliminary examination of election results suggests that it was among the middle-class and lower-middle-class Jews, especially those who were elderly or Orthodox or both, that the greatest switch to Yorty occurred. Sample precincts in black-Jewish border areas, and in an area where there had been a fierce debate in the community over a bussing issue, show the highest turnout and the highest pro-Yorty sentiment.

A man in charge of getting out the Jewish vote for Bradley placed the blame for the switch on one issue: "school unrest." His door-to-door canvassers heard about little else from the voters, who apparently often linked local disturbances with what they had heard from the media nationally concerning black anti-Semitism and the "community control" controversy in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Jews, traditionally sensitive to school issues anyway, also had a number of local incidents to build their fears upon—incidents which were often virtually ignored in the Los Angeles *Times*, but which brought eight-column front-page headlines in the community newspapers. These stories were carefully reproduced along with articles concerning Ocean Hill-Brownsville in flyers sent out on Yorty's behalf. Yorty's campaign devoted substantial effort to the Jewish vote, concentrating on those Jewish areas that were not high-income and were close to and sensitive to the onrushing black "threat." Needless to say, Bradley did nothing to encourage Jewish fears, and indeed, made a strong speech condemning black anti-Semitism. But just as obviously, no Jewish voter would consider himself a "racist" for voting against candidates identified, however vaguely or indirectly, with groups who were attacking the schools in general or those schools in particular in which such a disproportionate number of Jews work as teachers and administrators. The endorsement of Yorty by a small group of Conservative rabbis helped to legitimize this vote further, and probably was in no way offset by the vigorous efforts of a group of liberal rabbis to condemn Yorty's scare tactics, for these men could be, and were, dismissed as "the establishment."

Nor did Yorty leave his courting of the Jewish vote to the conflicts mentioned in the press. Yorty has, within the limits of a weak mayoral system, done his best to make positive and particularistic appeals to the various ethnic groups within the city. In the older Jewish areas, his frequent mention of the high number of Jews he had appointed to posts in his administration, and his casual references to one of Los Angeles's "sister cities," Eilat, Israel, gave voters still moved by such appeals another good reason to support him.

The other ethnic group Yorty courted with even greater success was the Mexican-Americans. He did better in the primary in Spanish-speaking precincts than in almost any other area of the city and in the runoff he got an estimated 60 per cent of the Mexican-American vote. He used the traditional techniques of ethnic politics—techniques rejected by many California politicians either because they are not supposed to work or because they are "immoral." Another "sister city" was Mexico City. "Amigo Sam" raised the Mexican Flag on the anniversary of Mexico's independence. Prominent Mexican-Americans were made city commissioners. Though Bradley had the support of Cesar Chavez, though he offered a position paper calling for a change in the city council to insure Mexican-American representation, Yorty had the support of the voters.

Of greater importance in the election was the fact that polls showed Mexican-Americans to be more concerned about "crime in the streets" than any other group in the city—and with reason. Crime rates in their neighborhoods tend to be high, but unlike Negroes, they feel free to complain publicly about it. Because "crime in the streets" has been used by some as an anti-black slogan, and because many blacks believe (wrongly) that whoever uses that phrase is a racist, black leaders speak out against crime at their peril. Bradley, who issued position papers on "law enforcement with justice," was affected by these constraints. Because Mexican-Americans are a low-visibility, highly localized minority group, they have been spared the popular connection afflicting Negroes between the mugger and the black face, and thus they have been spared the necessity of being defensive about the crime issue. They make no bones about their concern over it and they respond favorably to a candidate, like Yorty, who echoes their fears. Moreover, they are sensitive to the attention given to the "Negro plight" in the media and by the federal government, and concerned that they are not getting their "fair share," a situation seemingly not likely to improve under a black mayor (a popular Yorty theme).

The aged are another group that played an important part in the Los Angeles and Minneapolis elections, and may well make the difference in the race in Detroit. In Minneapolis, which has the highest percentage of elderly of any major city in the country with the exception of St. Petersburg, Florida, the aged not only voted in record numbers, but provided much of the manpower for the Stenvig volunteer effort. The plight of the elderly in cities, while frequently described, has been all too easily dismissed in the past. Restricted, often, by fixed incomes, hurt by high property taxes, forced to move or make expensive renovations when urban renewal enters an area, and trapped by their lack of resources from escaping to the suburbs, they see themselves, not surprisingly, threatened by liberal mayors and expanding black settlements. Most importantly, while the chief vic-

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tims of black crime are black, in cities where much housing is integrated, as in Minneapolis and Detroit, the white victim of street crime is almost invariably an old person, vulnerable because of his age and because of where he lives. More than for any other group, "crime in the streets" is a legitimate issue for the aged. Together with their generally "localistic" orientation and concern with other problems, this makes the aged a potent, conservative, unified voting bloc in cities.

Finally, a group widely believed to have increased its influence in the cities as other, organized, liberal elements have declined in significance is the police. The "Skolnick Report" to the National Commission on Violence states, for example: "... recent events point to a new and far more significant politicization of the police." While police involvement in mayoral campaigns this year has made their political activity and viewpoints more visible, it has also made more clear some of the constraints that operate on that activity. The Minneapolis Police Officers Federation, in an unprecedented move, endorsed the candidacy of their president, Charles Stenvig, but few policemen took an active part in the campaign (although members of their families may have). They were wary of the effect a too active involvement would have on their promotions and salaries if Stenvig did not win. Furthermore, their political strength was down from what it had been a few years earlier, when they had organized to back candidates who supported their salary demands. This decline was largely the result of a recently-passed ordinance allowing police officers to live outside the city. The ordinance, which was opposed by black groups, has evidently led to a rapid migration of policemen to the suburbs, and, therefore, to less political influence and less interest on their part in the city. The political climate of a city seemingly so susceptible to a law-and-order appeal may also produce constraints. A high police officer who took an active leadership role in the Stenvig campaign commented to an interviewer: "Basically I'm opposed to policemen being involved in politics. Stenvig's opposed to it." The statement, while perhaps not quite an accurate reflection of his personal attitude, was an accurate reflection of his perception of what it was necessary to say in Minneapolis.

In Detroit, the police entered into a pre-primary coalition with a group of conservative homeowners' associations, and leaders of the Detroit Police Officers Association talked publicly of vigorous political activism in the future. It was an uneasy and perhaps impossible alliance, however, given the salary demands of the police and the reluctance of the homeowner groups to support increases in wages paid for out of higher taxes. In many cities, referenda elections indicate that the poor and the black are more likely to support higher police salaries than are white homeowners.

Perhaps the most significant phenomenon involving the police is the increasing political visibility of the police chief. Surveys in Los Angeles showed that a candidate endorsement by Chief Tom Reddin, who retired in the midst of the election to take a job as a TV newscaster, would have had more influence with voters than that of any other man. Political pros in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Atlanta refer to the police chiefs in those cities as "easily the most popular public figure in the city," yet all three chiefs (including the retired Reddin) have moderate, if not liberal, reputations. Once a relatively anonymous public servant, the police chief has come to possess an "image" as important as that of the mayor, and the most successful chiefs are those practiced in the art of public relations. Detroit's Mayor Cavanagh indicates that "an administration is viewed not just through its mayor—but also through its police commissioner." The mayor who appoints a "smooth" police chief, interested in community relations but also endowed with a strong, manly image, may be able to take much of the law-and-order heat off himself, as has been the case in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Atlanta.

In 1961 a number of "young Turks" were swept into the mayor's office around the country, in a great "year of the liberals." Among them were Ivan Allen, Jerome Cavanagh, Arthur Naftalin, and, yes, even Sam Yorty. The elections, particularly Cavanagh's and Yorty's, represented a "backlash" against the "established" powers and the thrust of their rhetoric and programs was optimistic and forward-looking. Eight years later, only Yorty chose to run again. The energy and accomplishments of the early 60's had seemingly been replaced by despair, exhaustion, and fear. Mayor Naftalin said in an interview in the New York *Times*, "The work of mayor has become increasingly difficult and demanding . . . we have a weak mayoral system, which increases the frustrations of the job, which are plenty already." Mayor Cavanagh put it more succinctly: "If you win, what have you won?"

To some degree the 1961 generation of mayors fell victim to forces beyond its control—although by their actions the mayors may have speeded up tendencies that were already present. Out-migration took many liberal voters into the suburbs, while increasingly restive blacks acquired a new significance. A generation trained by the New Deal to look to Washington for old-age benefits and meaningful labor legislation, found mayoral elections a good place to mount a "protest" vote to assert the primacy of local concerns. Party, labor, and other interests which had traditionally worked to assure the election of liberals or at least "good government" types, found their organizations weakened by the emergence of new groups and by the increasingly clear distinctions which many of their stalwarts drew between national

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and local questions. The liberal mayors, who were able to capitalize on their "national" approach during the vigor of the Kennedy and early Johnson years, found with the advent of the Vietnam war that little more could be expected from Washington. Caught between the "massive urban problems" which they had helped to define so clearly to the nation, and their inability to come up with new sources of revenue for dealing with these problems, the mayors clearly were in a position to be not only "backlashed," but "frontlashed" as well.

There can be no doubting the conservative mood of much of today's urban electorate. How it will be expressed, however, cannot be inferred simply from the mood itself. Institutions and organizations and personalities will complicate, and perhaps ultimately change completely, that expression. Even "conservative" and localistic mayors will find preserving that stance not as easy as it looks. They are dependent on Washington for money and thus they must look to their reputation in Washington circles. If they have higher political ambitions, they must worry about their image with the affluent suburban voters. And if they want to please their own constituents, they will have to do something more than just talk about service and virtue—and to do more than talk places one immediately in the tangled politics of "pilot programs," the search for new revenues, and hard bargaining with organized police officers, school teachers, and the like. Indeed, perhaps the men who will be most successful as constituency-oriented, law-and-order mayors will be those who explicitly renounce higher ambitions or ignore what others think of their image. Cavanagh and Naftalin had a wonderful (though at times wonderfully fickle) popularity in the national media; Yorty had a terrible national press. Today, only Yorty remains.

The bright young men who would like to be mayor but who dislike courting what they think is a "backlash" or "reactionary" vote had better think twice. The dilemma is less serious than it appears—or more accurately, the dilemma arises because the bright young men tend to take too seriously the media definition of both their own image and the nature of the urban mood. In principle, one should be able to be both liberal and localistic, concerned about crime but not enamored of purely rhetorical solutions for crime, desirous of more federal aid without mistakenly arguing that "all big cities are alike" or that all face identical crises which only Washington can solve. The corollary to the "New Federalism" is a "New Localism"—a renewed interest in the urgent concerns of constituents, and especially those many concerns that blacks and whites share alike.

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Journal from Israel

Edward Grossman

JERUSALEM: A group of Baptist students at the West Jerusalem Y.M.C.A., where I am staying. I recognize their faces—the faces of what we called in junior high school "straight arrows," some scheming, others chaste and good. I recognize too their accents, the Southwestern drawl of Bonnie and Clyde, which makes me homesick when I hear it though I've never been west of Columbus, Ohio, while a New York voice overheard makes me glad to be far from America. I got to talking with one of these likeable flat-earthers in the milk bar of the Y. A boy, not the scheming kind I would guess from his eyes, who is spending a term away from seminary, teaching arithmetic and Bible to Christian Arab children in East Jerusalem. I had heard that the Israeli government puts such enterprises under a certain restraint, but this boy assured me that as long as there was no proselytizing of Jews the mission was given all assistance and treated with the greatest courtesy. It positively gave me pleasure to hear him talk, and I'm afraid that—meaning no disrespect to him, wanting only to encourage him—I fell to mimicking his accent. I told him I had something of a hobby of trying to place Americans by their appearance and the sound of their voices. "OK," he said, happy to play the game, "whar d'ye think ah cum frum?" "Texas, ah reckin." "Why, that's right." "*West* Texas," I added recklessly. "Golly, How'd ye know that?" "Like ah say: it's mah hobby. Mebbe ah ken even tell y'what *town* y'cum frum." "OK." I picked the only town I knew—"El Paso?" "Naw! Yaw 'way off there. Ah cum frum Lubbock. Lubbock, Texas." I was charmed by his never asking me where I came from. Later I asked him whether he had seen *Bonnie and Clyde*. He said he had heard the song but hadn't seen the movie. He didn't get to see many movies anyhow. Was it true that Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were folk heroes in his part of the country? I don't think he knew what a "folk hero" is, but he said that he remembered his grand-daddy reminiscing about the Barrow gang—"the devil's children." The movie was playing in Tel Aviv; it was sure to come to Jerusalem soon, and I urged him to go and see it.

* * * *

TWICE AS I was walking in the bazaar in the Old City on the way to the Mount of Olives, an Arab child approached holding in his fist a small live bird, a sparrow I think, and said, "Pay five pounds or I break his neck." I said go ahead, break it. One child did, the other didn't. I am told that many tourists hand over the money. Five pounds is about $1.35.

* * * *

DOUBT IS thrown on the authenticity of the Holy Sepulcher by the fact that religious law has always forbidden the burial of Jews within the walls of the city. Until 1948 the traditional burial place was on the Mount of Olives, which is east of the walls and has probably the best view of Jerusalem. During the period of Jordanian occupation a European chain was licensed to build the Intercontinental Hotel there. The cemetery was plowed under, and some of the gravestones taken away and used for flooring in Arab Legion barracks and latrines. Against the wishes of Orthodox Jews the Israeli Ministry of Tourism has made its own arrangement with the owners of the Intercontinental, which was seized in the course of the Six-Day War. Many more tourists will come to Israel and Jerusalem this summer than any previous summer, and it will be hard to cope with them. Without the Intercontinental, a large hotel, the situation might have been impossible.

The architectural "motif"—I think that is the word in the trade—of the Intercontinental is a sort of marriage of the Hilton and the Persian styles. Toward this end the stone of the Judean Hills, which takes on a pink hue at dawn and dusk, is used to good effect. There is a fountain out front and foiled archways, and in short the Intercontinental is one of the least garish new hotels I have seen.

But what of the party of Americans that I saw at the hotel's smorgasbord? As I moved down

EDWARD GROSSMAN, who has recently returned from an extended visit to Israel, is at work on a book of memoirs that will be published by Harper & Row.

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the line and noted their fat behinds, henna-dyed hair, harlequin glasses, and the very sound level of their eating, a lyric of Brecht's occurred to me: *Erst Kommt das Fressen, dann Kommt die Moral.* But my reaction to the tourists was untenable on at least two counts. One, I doubt many of them were aware that the hotel they were stuffing themselves in stood on desecrated ground, and, two, I was about to eat there myself.

I found a place in the corner near the huge picture windows. As I've said, the Mount of Olives has the best view. It is high, yet right next to the Old City, and everything can be seen in composition. The perspective over the church steeples and bell towers, the Mosque of Omar, the golden mass of smaller domes, red-tiled roofs, half circles and overlapping parallelograms, is curiously foreshortened, as if in those paintings of the Virgin and Child with the unearthly Jerusalem for background the Florentine painters had not been working according to convention but had been reliable to nature. This coincidence is only partial. On account of the super-translucent atmosphere and the surrounding hills, all bare and devastated by goats on this side of the old armistice line, the light for most of the day is unrefracted, unsoftened, harsh, and there is nothing that yields to the eye as in those paintings. That yields to *my* eye, that is. No use legislating response for others: it's hard enough to keep oneself from seeing everything as it was preconceived for selfish needs. Disraeli, a young mystic on the make, walked through that golden mass down there—much of which is still, after all, made up of hovels—and was inspired to be in the city of his ancestors, King David and Jesus Christ; Mark Twain, constipated cynic, was scornful of the beggar children and the hawkers of religious junk.

ON A WEEKNIGHT I took H. to the King David to have a drink on the terrace. I like to sit there after dark because it's cool, and not too noisy, and there is a view of the illuminated walls of the Old City. The King David is correct. It is not the sort of place where H. would normally go. You see a lot of diplomats there of the senior variety; well-off tourists traveling by themselves take the rooms. If a Hollywood movie is made about Israel a scene on the terrace is obligatory. These are reasons neither to go nor to stay away. I guess H. simply prefers the disagreeable coffeehouses where her friends collect, and where, if she doesn't have an escort, she can pay her bill without pain—she writes propaganda in French for the Foreign Ministry, and her salary can't be very big.

Off the job H. nearly always wears jeans. However she made no fuss and put on a dress when I asked her out this time. Since she is easy-going I was all the more surprised when I unintentionally got her angry by advocating, debater-style, a position I wouldn't necessarily defend except for purposes of conversation. (I think it was at prep school that I learned how to talk out of both sides of my mouth. During senior year I was elected captain of the debating team, and it went through its season undefeated. In competition with another school we would argue before supper the affirmative to some such resolution as ". . .that Red China should be admitted to the United Nations," and after supper the negative, and both times win.)

She was telling me about a petition she had signed which called on the government to pledge to the Arabs that Israel had no territorial ambitions, and would pull back to the June 5, 1967 borders everywhere except in Jerusalem in return for a peace treaty. The petition had been circulated in the University and elsewhere and had picked up about a thousand signatures.

"Do you think it will have an effect?" I asked.

"Not really. Everything is going the other way. They're setting up new kibbutzim, improving the roads on the West Bank, giving the Arabs fertilizer, tractors. They mean to stay."

"Maybe the policy would change if Nasser and the rest weren't so intransigent."

"We're giving them no choice. Anyway, a lot of Israelis would rather keep everything and go on fighting the Fatah forever, than give something back and have peace. Look at Dayan and his plan."

"Maybe I don't understand Dayan. Isn't he saying that it's necessary to widen the borders a bit for security? They used to be able to shell Tel Aviv."

"He also talks about 'The Historic Right of the Jewish People to their Homeland from the Mediterranean to the Jordan.' "

"Does he?"

"Sure, he's big buddies with the sheikhs and they throw banquets for him, but actually he agrees with the people in the Whole Land of Israel Movement. It's on account of him that those religious nuts who showed up in Hebron were allowed to stay."

"I didn't know he had the last word on that. Do you know any people in the Land of Israel Movement?"

"A few in the University. Some of my best friends, as they say."

"It's a queer bunch. There are people in it you'd never expect."

"The people I know are all in it for different reasons. They're mixed up. And then there are the others, the ones who are sure. The nuts."

"There are a lot of poets and writers, I hear. There's Agnon, for example. How do you explain that?"

"I knew you'd mention him. Actually I'm happy he's joined. You know, I never could finish a story of his, let alone a novel. I can never read anything by people who win Nobel Prizes for Lit-

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erature. Can you imagine Gênet winning a Nobel Prize?"

"I have trouble reading Agnon too. Some smart critics say he's very good, though. At any rate I'm sure he's a humanist. He's not bloody-minded like your Gênet."

"Gênet is beautiful. If he were an Israeli he'd be in prison."

"No. He'd be living with a beautiful Arab acolyte in Bethlehem."

H. giggled at this, and we went off on one of those tangents that is seen later to have nothing to do with the way the conversation seems to have been ordained to go. We got back to the track this way:

H. complained, casually, about the problems of taking a vacation. She had saved enough to go to Sweden for two weeks on a special charter flight. Part of that money had to be paid to the government in the form of a tax imposed on Israelis who want to leave the country on pleasure trips. All right: she had paid it. But now something else had come up: her Army board was wondering whether it ought to stamp her passport, because there was an irregularity in her military record—she had been sick and not served the whole two years, and so had a few months to make up.

"What are they afraid of, that I won't come back?" she said.

"It's been done. There are streets on the West Side of Manhattan full of Israelis with doubtful records."

"Oh, I know. But I've got no intention of running away. This is my country. I only wish it *was* a country, though, instead of a penal colony. Why do I have to pay a tax just to get out and take a little vacation, get away from the sun for two weeks? Am I on parole? I've done my time in the Army. Nineteen months in an office, typing and making coffee for a Colonel of Intelligence who couldn't keep his hands off me. The father of three children. Was it my fault I got pneumonia? I mean, why can't I be a Jew in Israel, and just be left alone?"

All this in an easy-going voice.

I TOLD her, "I can't think of another country where a girl would have to put up with this kind of nuisance."

"Neither can I. And you know what the reason for it is? It's because Israel insists on being different from any other country. Of course *I* have to suffer for it."

"You want Israel to be like all the other nations?"

"Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it's one of those things outside human power."

"Outside human power? Are you joking?"

"It may be that you're caught up in a Mystery. It's a strange story, after all. It hardly has an equal."

"What story?"

"Of the Jews."

"Oh! I know that story. I know it up to here. I'm a Sabra, remember?"

"So am I."

"Just by definition, darling. Not by anything else."

"Excuse me, but that may be the point. You haven't known any place but this to live in, right? For you it's ordinary and so what seems most important is to get rid of the stupidities and discomforts. For me it's different. Since I'm only a Sabra by name, when I come back, I don't—I can't—understand this as just another country, and don't even want it to be that."

"In other words I'm an Israeli, so I can't appreciate the greatness of Israel."

"Well, everybody's human. If you live with something all your life you feel differently about it. Look at those walls for instance. They don't say anything to you."

"No, they don't. They were put up by the Saracens, incidentally. Do they say anything to you?"

"Were they? Still, you must know what I mean. It's like this: you're decent, and you're an Israeli, so when you say that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel, you mean Jewish patriotism as well. That's good. That's the kind of Israeli I hope I'd be."

"But you're not an Israeli and you're not going to be."

"Yes. So that I can suggest the Mystery of it, the miraculous aspect of a Jewish State in Palestine nineteen centuries after Masada, without feeling like a scoundrel. And that may even be good, because I just may be right too. The old Christian maps had Jerusalem in the center of the universe, you know."

"But I don't believe it. How can the Jews keep thinking they are at the center of the universe? Why, there are more little Arabs born every year than there are Jews living in the whole world. We don't even suffer anymore. There's more suffering in Vietnam, and in Biafra."

"But you're afraid, at least. Aren't you afraid?"

She shot me a look.

"Wait . . ." I told her.

"What a question."

When I saw that look, that spark of anger in her eyes that are always so placid—cow-like—I realized I had made my mistake not only with that last question, but much earlier, and I was so dismayed at my bad judgment that before I could turn it into a joke, H. said, "Afraid? Have you got any idea what was going on here in '67? The expression on people's faces? And I knew Americans, too, who were here, spoke Hebrew, had jobs, everything was lovely. When Nasser closed the Straits they went back to New York with their American passports. So much for the Chosen People, the Mystery!"

"Hold on, I was only joking." Hastily I told her

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about the tutor I had once, the lady professor who was thrown out of Heidelberg in 1933, who used to sigh, "Ach, the Juice, Alvays the Juice." H. did laugh at this, reluctantly, and then less reluctantly at the other jokes and patter I followed it up with, I sweating lightly, working. It's hard not to wonder at people who laugh at a joke that I would not dream of laughing at myself, since I've told it a thousand times.

TEL AVIV: Driving down from Jerusalem I gave a lift to a hitchhiker, a soldier. The skin of his right palm and forearm was gouged by a deep wound as if a super-heated iron had been laid across. He told me that he had been hit by a single machine-gun round during the reprisal action at Karameh, where seventy Israelis died. He was nineteen years old. When I told him he was incredibly lucky, he grinned.

* * * *

AN OLD friend was taking his Guggenheim in Paris this last academic year: I saw a lot of him there before I came to Israel. A convivial sort anyway, and flush with his grant, he gave parties every week in his girl's apartment near the Ecole des Beaux Arts. Gave me a going-away party, too, and told me during it that, yes, I must have given him some good reasons but he kept forgetting why it was I was leaving Paris for "that Ghetto-by-the-Sea." On the staircase, way past midnight—I had a plane to catch at eight—he was still trying to get me to reconsider.

He was right. We had had this discussion before. "But," I used to tell him, almost exasperated, "You've never been there. How do you know?" "Buddy boy," he'd answer, "Tel Aviv is just like the neighborhood I grew up in." No way of guessing it from his appearance or accent, but thirty years ago he was a Brooklyn boy. I became almost exasperated not because I was an advocate of anything, but because it confused me to have a wise friend talk with more assurance than I've ever had about something he knew less about than I did. Furthermore there are only so many things to be seen in a lifetime and he had no great desire, he said, to see for himself.

A card postmarked Budapest was waiting when I came back from Jerusalem. So he'd taken the Austro-Hungarian trip that his heart was set on. Actually his is not an easy case to figure out. He's told me both his parents were half-Jewish, and spoke Magyar at home rather than Yiddish. What kind of ethnic-arithmetical sum comes of that?

As to how alike Tel Aviv is to his old neighborhood, I can't say. My profoundest experience with Brooklyn is through books, and I suspect this is to be distrusted. If he was speaking demographically, he was right: except for the people in the embassies, the airline offices, and the churches, everybody in Tel Aviv is Jewish. But of course he wasn't speaking only demographically. He meant provincialism, claustrophobia, noise, fear. I don't know whether a visit here would confirm him in his prejudices. It would depend, I suppose, on how important it was for him to find here what he thought he would find. It isn't hard to be struck by certain things if you're inclined; in fact even if you're not it's hard to escape them. On a hot day—and it's hot from April to October, hot right now—I wonder how meaningful the book stores and concerts and earnest intellectuals are. The sun is the primary fact and everything under it is sticky and close. Can there be a first-rate civilization in such a climate? (Only first-rate civilizations for my distinguished friend and me.) Everywhere else below a certain latitude people seem to have sensibly given themselves up to yeasty, provincial mediocrity—bread and circuses, and if no bread, at least circuses—as if to say, "It's too damn hot."

All the windows are open for a breath of wind. The apartment houses themselves are flimsy, match-box structures; most of Tel Aviv is jerry-built with hardly a thought for space or privacy. People live one on top of another like members of a big, variegated family squeezed into tight quarters, pressing each other's flesh, sniffing their sweat. Somewhat like the Puerto Rican neighborhood on the Lower East Side where I lived once for a few weeks, with the difference that there are very few poor (or rich) in Tel Aviv—it is a middle-class town. My second-story subleased apartment is more than decent by local standards, yet as I sit in it writing, dressed in shorts, sweating, the walls throb with a thousand sounds, the child upstairs scraping out scales on his violin, the woman next door shouting at her husband, the defective plumbing whistling and banging, the children at play in the back yard and in the street.

The children at play. On their account I might tell my friend when I see him again that if Tel Aviv is a ghetto, it is not one of the ordinary sort. From what I've read, the special victims of a ghetto are its children. By this test Tel Aviv, and Israel as a whole, comprise peculiar ghettos. Now I've seen a few places and countries, and I can't think of a better place to be a child in. You need only be under ten to be the favorite of the enormous *de facto* family here, to be treated like a prince, an heir apparent. The familiarity of adult Israelis among themselves, often irritable, becomes fond when directed at you. Even on the Tel Aviv buses you are deferred to, if you're a child. Note that these are the buses whose common added feature is the woman who has got it into her head that she has been short-changed or in some other way ill-treated by the driver—it may or may not be her imagination, this is not important—and who engages him in a shouting match for the duration of her ride, she sitting half-way to the rear of the bus, shouting from her seat, he driving, punching tickets, making change and, if she happens to sub-

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side, giving her his opinion into the rearview mirror, which starts her up again. The passengers in between don't seem to mind, particularly. It is just another discomfort to be suffered with the heat, the humidity, and the bumpy ride (these buses have no shock absorbers, and the drivers are frustrated hot rodders). Furthermore today's passive listener may be tomorrow's shouter. So the passengers sit, and stand, there, a load of glistening meat surrounded by hard words.

But the child is exempt. He is *motek*—darling, sweetie. If such a thing as collective historical memory exists, the operative one here is that the Germans murdered a million Jewish children, and many of those they didn't manage to murder, they orphaned. I suppose that even though she doesn't know it, that is what makes a middle-aged lady loaded with shopping get up and offer her seat to a child in the notorious number 25 bus. Lucky child, born in the sun no earlier than 1958.

YET—though I was born in 1942—I was once one of these lucky children too. My given name was Adi, "an ornament." Things happened; I left Israel, changed my name, grew up. Grievous thoughts, these, under this bright sun. However, I would come around to them sooner or later. I'm disposed to it. Also, I'm highly suggestible. It was thanks to what my friend would call Israel's cultural lag that these thoughts were sparked off.

I was able to see again Bergman's *Persona*, which is only now being shown here. I hoped that I would like it better the second time—but found myself again vaguely disappointed. One scene in particular set me briefly and no doubt unfairly against Bergman. In this scene a woman —who out of repugnance for the world has stopped speaking, has abandoned her career as an actress and rejected her child—comes across a photograph in a book. Bergman has her linger over it, mutely disturbed, and I supposed and believe I was right to suppose that she sees in this picture the motherless children of our time, her own child included.

It may have been that in picking the photograph that he did to disturb the woman in *Persona*, Bergman gave in to not quite the highest impulse. This is what I thought when I was sitting in the moviehouse. But now I think it may have been the recollection of the role of this phtograph in my own life that made me accuse Bergman of straying from integrity.

The photograph is well-known. It was taken during the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and it shows a group of people being herded out of a house by husky German soldiers brandishing rifles and wearing boots, helmets, and greatcoats. For me the tension in this picture came from the figure in the lower right-hand corner of a child about thirteen years old. When I was that same age and saw the photograph for the first time, I also thought, like Bergman's actress, that I recognized the child. His hands are up—all the Jews have their hands up—and his palms are like pale rectangles, with long stalk-like fingers. My palms, my fingers. It was more than a resemblance, it was perfect identity, and in my condition it gave me comfort to identify myself with him, my troubles with his martyrdom.

It goes without saying that I did something unacceptable to his memory in using it thus. There's little need for me to feel guilty, however, since I'm at least as far removed from the child I was at thirteen as I was from the child in the photograph when I first saw him. Furthermore I can remember some exceptional circumstances—not by way of excusing myself, but still exceptional. Why is it then that when I see this photograph in a movie, it can still, twice, disturb me?

I lived in a different place, often in a different town, each year from the time I was five until I got a scholarship to boarding school and left home. That particular winter and spring we were living on the top floor of a purple-black shingle house in Boston, amid square miles of other sober-looking three-family "dwellings," and red brick Catholic churches, and taverns, and bogus colonial supermarkets. A neighborhood like all the other neighborhoods which I now realize my father, professionally ambitious, was only passing through with his wife and child. But children don't have sophisticated attitudes toward time and place, they live in the here and now, and when in the parking lot of the junior high school I was offered truly dangerous fights by my classmates, it seemed to me I had been locked permanently and inexplicably into the role of victim.

It doesn't seem terrible in the telling, nor exceptional. Do little Irish boys whose fathers are cops and firemen and laborers still call little boys like me "Kike!" and aim hard-packed snowballs for the head? Yes, probably; they are only children and it is unrealistic to expect them to bear in mind resolutions passed by the Vatican Council. I expect the classic scenes will be recreated this winter, as stylized as an old passion play with poor Judas, as quaint to the adult observer, and as terrible for the victim.

They run over the asphalt toward me—in Roxbury snow is always aged patchy stuff. Dogs after a rabbit, this. I'm a good runner, and fear makes me extra fast, and my red stinging ear drives me on like an engine. When I have eluded them, instead of going home I wander into deepest Franklin Park, where there are hardly any squashed beer cans from last summer, and where traffic is only a distant intermittent noise. I throw down my schoolbooks and sit on a fallen tree trunk in the city woods. It couldn't be clearer to me why I ran: not out of sublime contempt for violence, but because I was afraid. By physiology, by something on a cellular level that is felt as a freezing sensation on the stomach, I am a coward. And

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yet I am far more alive to the shamefulness of not resisting one's tormentors than I am to the relief of having escaped them. I do not weep at the sky; I rage at it.

What solace, company, and explanation I have I find mainly—it goes without saying—in books. I had found it odd that a world stamp album that my father gave me as a birthday present a few years before should have had the pages for Austria and Germany cut out. On some kind of understanding he didn't tell me why, and I didn't ask. I was, perhaps, too young, I was happier, I think, where we lived then (a Yankee village in the Berkshires), and anyway there were plenty of other countries in the world and many interesting stamps. My self-initiation into history coincided with my term in this tougher neighborhood in Boston. That winter I would go on the MTA to Copley Square, to the Public Library, after school and on Saturdays, and read histories, almanacs, memoirs, atlases, encyclopedias, microfilmed newspapers. In a yellowing edition of *Life* magazine dating from 1943 I came across the picture of my Warsaw Ghetto double for the first time.

WHY, there I am, I thought, cradling *Life* on my knees, my feet in wet galoshes crossed before me. Definitely more pleasure than pain in flipping over that eleven-year-old page and finding that I was staring out at myself, and that the Irish boys, armed and clothed against the cold, were smiling for their picture. Back I went to the histories, with their maps showing that in the month I was born the area in black with the swastika superimposed reached its greatest extent—from Bergen to Tobruk, from the Channel to Stalingrad. The pictures of the officers with their silver death's head badges, as if to proclaim they had deliberately taken up the cause of perfect evil. The pictures of the stacked gray corpses at Belsen . . . gruesome, but static compared to the Ghetto picture. I returned to it every time I came to the library; it was like visiting with myself. War Bonds ad, table of contents, Betty Grable, the war in the Pacific, and hello, here I am, not looking too well, fixed in flight in a moment of the past that took place in black-and-white and acquires a yellow overlay as time passes.

Was there more to this than my overworked imagination?

I asked no questions but began to listen more closely for clues at home. Before, like any child, I had been exposed to that common stock of family lore that is as unremarkable to a child as the air he breathes. Now I collected stray, familiar remarks, took them away and inspected them, like a pack rat, conscientiously and quickly, for my parents never spoke of these things in English or Hebrew, only in Polish, and I was forgetting Polish fast.

From this evidence, from my hours in the library, from guesswork, this is what I pieced together: that my father, a doctor in the military, obeying the order of the Polish authorities for all able-bodied men to evacuate Warsaw in October 1939, and having no more suspicion than any sane man of what the approaching Germans intended to do, had traveled east with my mother, the two of them leaving behind their own parents, of whom now not even a photograph remained. That I was conceived in Russia during the winter of 1941. That my father had got the documents for my mother to leave the country through Persia, to travel pregnant with me, like a character in some legend, by bus through the Arabian Desert, so that I could be born in Jerusalem and live, a little boy in sandals, shorts and a cap, while my double burned.

* * * *

B., A WIT, displays a report gotten up by the municipality that estimates there are more than half a million cats in Tel Aviv. B. maintains that on learning of any development or current event, he always sits down and asks himself, "Now is this good for the Jews, or bad?" The cats he thinks are bad. According to him they pose a greater menace than the Arabs because they are "aesthetically demoralizing" and have an even higher birth rate.

It's true that everywhere in the residential districts you see these tough orange-colored animals with their long whiskers and torn fur, prowling through the garbage cans which they have no trouble overturning. From my balcony I can usually count at least five. And at night, when the neighbors have finally quit their balconies and switched off their transistor radios, when it is finally cool enough to sleep, the screaming begins. A sound I had never before heard. Once, during my first week here, I was awakened and thought that a child was being beaten. But the sound modulates and changes, like some witch's voice it turns carnal. Another time, coming home at three in the morning, I surprised a couple on the grass near the driveway. The huge tom was growling, and the female moaned and hissed, trying to scratch out her lover's eyes. B. says that rats would never behave this way.

KIBBUTZ G: Visited my uncle today, the only other member of my mother's family who survived. He and his wife are living now in a modern two-room apartment for which they waited ten years under the seniority rule, having lived during that time in a cabin whose roof leaked in winter. If the cabin was below the standard one would expect at this kibbutz—probably the largest and richest—their new place, on the other hand, equals in comfort if not in size a decent apartment in the city. My aunt shows me without comment their indoor WC and private shower. "Why not?" my uncle asks. "Is it written somewhere that socialists have

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to take communal showers? Enough idealism for me. I'm not a kid anymore." He and his wife drink boiling tea in the Russian style out of glasses, something I doubt I will ever learn to do. He is now the boss of the plastics factory, wears a white shirt and probably carries back and forth from work that briefcase which I catch sight of in the bedroom. My aunt used to be handsome but has aged considerably in the last six years; life on the kibbutz is particularly cruel for women. I am reminded that in *Alexandria Quartet* Durrell sends Justine up to Palestine, condemns her to a kibbutz, where she loses her beauty. As for my uncle, he has aged less noticeably. He is still robust and takes satisfaction in being able to beat me in arm-wrestling, which I suggest we play for old time's sake, because I know he wants to show me. Later they bring down a book from the shelf, something put out by the kibbutz press as a memorial to the members of the settlement who were killed in the war. There were twenty of them, and as I look through the album with its fuzzy "candid" photos and paragraphs describing each boy's good character and favorite hobbies, it is like looking through a provincial high school yearbook in honor of a class that has graduated. My aunt and uncle's only child, my cousin Shlomo, was too young to be drafted last year, but now is in the Army—a tankist—and my aunt, having heard that I plan to spend a day at Suez where Shlomo is stationed, gives me a package to deliver to him.

* * * *

THE EFFECT of overhearing in a queue a pair of gentlemen, both in that middle age which is terrible for their kind, speaking in native Hebrew, all wrists and hips and lips. I must learn to be encouraged by these things, as they show me that the existence of a Jewish State will bring normality in its wake, that some of Israel will be like unto all the other nations, which at this moment in the pageant of history is faggy. Likewise the sado-masochistic pulp on sale near the central bus station, resembling the stuff sold on 42nd St. near the Port Authority Terminal, with the difference that here the language used in the captions under the bondage photos is the language of Isaiah. But this is my dim sentimentality at work again—isn't *Black Lace, Sweet Lash* written in the same language as *King Lear*? Let me have no more delusions that it is a greater sin to abuse one language than another.

ASHKELON: Like most of the beaches in Israel this one is spoiled by the sludge that is washed ashore from ships in the Mediterranean. The stuff is visible in the form of dark lumps on the crest of waves, and it collects all along the sand in thick black strings that mark the progress of the tide. I had thought that the closing of Suez might cut down the pollution but for some reason this has not been the case. And Felix, owner and manager of the glorified motel where I am staying for a few days, tells me that things will soon get worse, as it will be impossible to keep much more substantial amounts of oil from leaking out of the pumping apparatus once the forty-inch main from Eilat to Ashdod (just north of here) goes into operation. In the meantime Felix provides a bottle of gasoline outside the door of each of his bungalows, for rubbing the oil sludge off the skin. He is an alert and competent *hotelier* by his own description, thinks of everything, and obviously enjoys himself most when serving drinks and holding forth behind the bar. "Nice country, Israel, nice country," he says to his listeners with a wink. "I came here from Vienna thirty-four years ago, and I've loved every minute of it. Only one complaint I have to make: too many damn bloody Jews."

Three thousand years ago only the Philistines lived here; modern Ashkelon was settled first by South Africans. Then a military air field was constructed (that is probably where the jets that are in the habit of buzzing the beach come from); some of the pilots and crew live in town. But the South Africans and the military have been outnumbered by immigrants from Yemen and Morocco, whom it was the government's policy to concentrate in outlying areas chosen for development. On Saturdays, and in the summer every day, the children of these people are brought, singing and shouting, down to the beach in gigantic British Leyland Diesel trucks. The children have a good time and don't seem to notice the oil that sticks to them when they come out of the water, or the mess they themselves make with candy wrappers and pop bottles. Felix says that the local ambulance screams past the motel on its way to the beach on the average of once every five days; I did in fact hear a siren yesterday. This is not surprising, since nowhere in the world is the ability to swim a common characteristic of the poor. In the back pages of the newspapers I also come across a report now and then of a drowning in Gaza (just south of here) where several hundred thousand Arab refugees are killing time and an occasional Israeli, and resisting inducement and pressure to take make-work jobs or move to the West Bank of the Jordan.

I had the longest talk I have ever had with an Arab—it must have lasted forty minutes—right here on the beach late Friday afternoon. He had come the other way, from the West Bank; this I knew before I met him by the legend on the side of the bus parked above the beach: "Holy Land Tours Limited, Ramallah." Ramallah, north of Jerusalem, in what used to be Jordan. The beach was emptying fast because there's no public transport on Sabbath eve. The Arab tourists in a rather tight group were marveling at the surf. I sat on the

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sand a little apart from them, I, watcher of sunsets, curious but not rude, and soon a man detached himself from the group and began to talk with me about the weather and so forth with a courtliness that is rare enough in Israel. "Shalom, sir," he began. It was a delicate dance I had the feeling we were doing, conversing about this and that but careful always not to mention *It*. Or rather, I now think I was more concerned with this than he was. He managed to get out the pertinent facts about himself after all. Once lived in this vicinity, hadn't seen the sea in twenty years, had a brother in Cleveland. Whoosh! . . . a jet fighter-bomber streaked overhead. The other Arabs pointed at it, already a speck. Whoosh! . . . another. But my interlocutor made no remark or sign of having noticed. He was persistently polite. Accusing me of having chased him from his home? Fishing for sympathy? "I hope you will visit Ramallah, sir."

All this made me late for supper.

On Friday evening Felix has it served outdoors and discreetly plays waltzes over the public address system. During dessert or coffee Strauss will be overwhelmed by the super-amplified din of a discotheque down the road, but until then the scene alfresco is as civilized as can be. The tables are covered with linen, the silverware is heavy, the food and wine first class, the service smooth. Since such a combination is nearly as rare in Israel as courtliness, there is a large crowd of customers at Felix's tonight. I see from the white Willys sedans that even the staff from UN relief in Gaza have made the trip.

I take a late, quick shower. A young fellow, Jamie, who is at the head of the table to which I have been assigned tonight, introduces himself. He has the brisk manner of an insurance salesman on his way up. Ever so slightly cross-eyed, but otherwise not bad looking, and his hair has been handsomely "styled." This plus the fact that his nose is red from the sun leads me to suppose that he has recently come from London. He introduces me to his sister, Susan (next to whom Felix—Danubian cupid—has put the card with my name), to Susan's friend, Pamela, who, in tribute I suppose to having detected my American accent, Jamie announces is "hitched" to Yitzchak, the mustached Israeli beside her, to Muriel, an American lady of, say, 34, in a colorful tropical print, to, furthest away, fat, Teutonic Gretel.

Susan, slapping her pretty arm: "Won't somebody do something about these dreadful bugs?"

Her brother: "Don't look at me. I'm on holiday."

Jamie, vacation or not, energetically draws out my compatriot, Muriel, who is pleased to talk about herself. "Are you enjoying the country, then, Muriel?"

"Sure am. The ambience here is just terrific. And I'm getting so much more out of it since I've started learning the language."

Presently Jamie focuses attention on me. I answer that I am only a tourist, but he is not satisfied with that and presses for more; much more. There is nothing I can do but to begin to ask him questions about himself. For example, where did he pick up his command of American?

"Real estate. Spent a year in real estate in New York. Lower Park Avenue."

He declares he once made a speech against what he calls the Communist Menace in Union Square ("Oh!" murmurs Muriel) and he lists the best places to eat steak in the Village, and the best places to go dancing.

"So you liked New York?"

"Not bad. Still, London's the only place I'd ever want to live in permanent. It's the greatest city in the world, no two ways about it."

"The swingingest city?"

I am getting sarcastic, a quality I don't like, becoming intolerant of just ordinary chatter, and although Jamie and the others seem not to catch on, I am relieved when he lets up on me and the conversation takes a general turn. Pamela states that in the five years she has lived here it has never been more humid and hot; husband Yitzchak contradicts her with a hoot. "Doesn't it all depend where you are?" Susan says. "Here it's quite muggy, but in Beersheba where we were yesterday it was dry."

FELIX APPROACHES, smiling, hands conducting *Tales From the Vienna Woods*, suggests a nice wine, perhaps, and there is a bit of stage business between him and Jamie concerning the best choice, which ends with Felix giving us what he had in mind in the beginning: Carmel Dry Export.

The talk now goes on to deal with restaurants and discotheques in Tel Aviv. Here the opinion is that they are certainly improving but that on account of the tourists flooding in you have to be careful or you will be overcharged.

Felix has poured the wine. Jamie, like the hero of a book of etiquette, has sipped, pondered, approved.

Warned by a high-pitched whistle, I look up just in time to see a revolving red light streak from north to south not very far above the palm trees. An instant later the light disappears, and (Muriel shrieks) the roar of the shock wave hits.

Muriel, left hand on sternum: "Lord! What was that?"

The Carmel Dry Export quivers in its goblets. "Mirage jet," Yitzchak tells her. Another machine passes in the same direction, though not exactly overhead.

Susan: "Fantastic."

Jamie: "Keeps the Arabs on their good behavior, down in Gaza."

Muriel: "Well, it certainly scared the wits out of me."

"Cheers."

"Cheers."

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Muriel: "La chai-yem."

Jamie: "Skillful devils they are, those pilots."

Muriel: "Sure are, but I had no business getting scared. After all, I've seen them at their tricks before."

Jamie: "How do you mean?"

Muriel: "During the Independence Day Parade in Jerusalem. I don't care for parades, but when those jets went by, well, I was moved to tears."

Susan: "They *are* fantastic."

I look sharply at Susan. Is she leading Muriel on? Englishwomen can be treacherous.

Jamie: "You haven't seen anything yet, Muriel." He leans over his soup, talks across me. "Couple of days ago we were invited to see a graduation ceremony at the air field. Have you ever seen a jet come swooping in at zero altitude and drop rockets and napalm, not more than a hundred and fifty yards from where you're sitting?"

Muriel: "Why ... no."

Pamela: "Well, we did."

Susan: "Fantastic."

Jamie: "Yitzchak, here, is in the Air Force himself. He'll tell you that those boys are nineteen years old, and every one of them is an ace jet pilot."

Muriel: "Get out! Really?"

"Have to be. Otherwise the Arabs would be in here just like. . . ." He snaps his fingers.

In Hebrew I ask Yitzchak, "What do you do? Pilot?"

"Nope. Radar man."

Jamie: "Can you believe, Muriel, that they can hit a scarecrow that's no larger than a man with a barrel of napalm at five hundred miles an hour?"

"Get out!"

"So help me. Saw it with our own eyes, didn't we?" Susan and Pamela nod their heads, and Yitzchak licks his mustache.

Jamie: "And don't think the Arabs don't know it."

Muriel: "Do they have demonstrations for them, too?"

Jamie: "Don't have to. They know all about it. An illiterate bunch they are, diseases you haven't even heard of, but they know, don't you worry."

The next course is served.

Jamie: "Here, what's this?"

Pamela: "Actually it's duck."

Muriel, with concern writ large on her face, to Jamie: "But if what you say is right, how come those terrorists, the whichamacallit. . . ."

"Fatah?" Jamie says through a mouthful of duck.

". . . yes, the Fatah—how come they're so active?"

"Nothing to it."

"The Fatah, they are nothing," Yitzchak adds. "But. . . ."

Jamie points his fork at Muriel. "Listen: Did you read the Jerusalem *Post* this morning? You did? Then you saw where they killed twelve Fatah in an ambush, and one got away? It's always like that. Seven killed, one captured. Nine killed, one gets away. You know who the one is? An Israeli *agent*. He leads the others right into the trap that's been laid, and then he hoofs it. They don't take any of them prisoner. Just shoot the lot."

"Don't be worried about the Fatah," Yitzchak assures Muriel. "We know what they are going to do before they know."

Muriel: "Well, I did know that Israeli intelligence is wonderful. They have all the latest data on the Arab capitals. I didn't know that about just shooting the terrorists, though. I mean when they could take them prisoner."

Jamie: "What do you want them to do with them? Put them in jail? They have to be fed. Let them go? They'd only come back again."

Muriel: "Still, it doesn't seem. . . ."

"Just shoot the lot." The wine seems to have the effect on Jamie of dampening his brightness and bringing out something earnest. It also further slackens his eye muscles so that he appears more and more to be looking at the tip of his burnt nose.

"The next war," Yitzchak announces, "will be a disaster for the Arabs. We will be in Amman, Damascus, and Cairo after two hours."

"*Yofee*," I say. "Marvelous."

Muriel: "Oh dear. Do you think there'll be another war?"

Yitzchak raises his eyebrows, meaning, "What do *you* think?"

Jamie: "We Jews are a peaceful people. We want a piece of Jordan, a piece of Syria, a piece. . . ."

Susan: "Jamie! That's naughty!"

During the laughter I sneak a look at stupid, impassive Gretel, that German.

Yitzchak: "In Israel we have the expression, 'The Arabs have surrounded us again, those poor bastards.'"

When the band strikes up at the discotheque the subject changes. "Come along, then," Jamie says to me, and so I do, turning over in my mouth, as a dessert, another sharp expression we Jews have, which in the heat of my blossoming indigestion (that duck) seems for the moment only half true: "The Jew is a man who stands up to his eyes in shit; but his brow touches heaven." Now that we *are* all standing, however, I can see that Susan has fan*tastic* legs.

* * * *

POSTSCRIPT: I was waiting for one of them to bungle a point of fact, but they were accurately informed. It's true, the Arabs are hapless now, the Jews top dogs. So much the better of course; and what use would it have been to pounce on a mistake? Better to have posed the following question for the company's consideration: what dis-

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tinction still deserves to be drawn between one murder and another? This is not a question Jews really needed to ask themselves for two thousand years before my birth, to put it egocentrically. But about the time I was being born there was a reconsideration going on of what were the minimal decencies each man was owed. Jews were the prime objects on which this reconsideration was carried out, and some of those who survived it decided that their own sense of decency must now take second place to the preservation of their lives and their childrens' lives. More: it would not be an eye for an eye, but a hundred for one. How unfortunate! the faint-hearted, ethical part of me cries out. Nevertheless I would not like to be on the receiving end of the Furor Judaicus. The Jordanians have a way of setting up in villages the batteries with which they shell kibbutzim across the border, so that when the Jews silence them a complaint may be lodged with the UN concerning civilian casualties. In self-defense Jewish artillery blows up Arab artillery, and blows up some women and children too. There is a moral dilemma here that is unsatisfactorily resolved (for me) by pleading the injunction that one must not let oneself be killed anymore. What is worse, to know that one has pulled the lanyard and killed the innocent with the guilty at long distance, or to brood (if one is still alive to brood) on running away from the Irish toughs? Not morally equivalent situations, I daresay, since I always would have been alive.

As ARRANGED I join the Army convoy as it passes through Ashkelon a little after dawn. My place is in the back of the last truck, packed in with the motley of reservists who are being taken to the Canal to do their annual thirty days. I guess most of the men around me are between twenty-five and thirty-five and come from the city. There is a good collection among them of pot bellies, balding heads, beards, glasses, and non-regulation articles of clothing. Not much talk, no singing. They are as sleepy as I am. However, sleep is impossible since the convoy travels fast over mediocre roads. After we cross into the Gaza Strip breakfast is served: for each man one paper bag containing a cucumber, rolls, cold hard-boiled egg, tea. The convoy speeds through the town of Gaza. The main street is empty. A burnt-out Russian tank stands on the brown lawn of the plaza behind a pedestal that supports a pair of stone boots. Jeeps pass in the opposite direction now and then, but I do not see any Arabs until about an hour later, when we are going through the town at the southern end of the Strip, Rafiah. These Arabs do not wear shirt and trousers like their countrymen in the West Bank and Jerusalem: they are dressed in the long pyjama-like robe of the *fellah*. A group of them sit in the shade of a coffeehouse; there are many, many children. Already it is quite warm.

Beyond Rafiah, the border that used to separate the Palestine Mandate from Sinai. The landscape becomes bleak: stony, sandy soil with scrubby vegetation and crumbling ghost villages. Along the way there are hulks of all sorts of military equipment that have been shoved just a few yards off the road. We approach El Arish, and the old Kantara-Haifa rail line, rusty and blown over in places by sand, appears on the left, and the Mediterranean on the right. It is noon. We stop and have lunch in an Armenian cafe near the beach. Children everywhere. They try to peddle us sea shells, and when this fails stick out their filthy hands and say, "Shalom, baksheesh. Baksheesh." They seem to hold us in good-natured contempt, in contrast to the adult Arabs in the alley nearby, whose contempt is sullen.

We enter real desert after El Arish. Tall dunes, not a blade or a living thing, only the occasional bombed vehicle. We're going backward over the route of the Exodus. "You'll need this," the soldier beside me says, and gives me a handkerchief. He looks something like good old Lou Costello, wide as he is high, pop-eyed. It becomes breathlessly hot: the thick canvas of the truck does not allow air to circulate. Only dust seems to be getting in. The helpful soldier makes a mask from a handkerchief and ties it around his head, covering his nose and mouth, but he coughs in spite of it and his eyes tear profusely. My throat starts to scratch, but that's all. It's good for once not to be the first to begin to suffer from something.

This is a place without seasons, without water, unreclaimable. Can understand even better now the wisdom of my prep school's Hymn 110: *I will not cease from mental fight/Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand/Till we have built Jerusalem/In England's green and pleasant land . . .* or New England's would do as well. Blake wanted to eat his cake and have it too, as who does not. To have Jerusalem, to have the assurance that universal history will have its final act in your city, but to have also the seasons, a milder sun, the smell of burning leaves in autumn, and library privileges at Harvard.

Conditions begin to get to me at about the same time as the other men. I experiment with a mask and find that it makes it harder to breathe. Our world turns into a bumpy suffocating enclosure where vague forms cough and spit. *My* world, that is, as my glasses become coated with dust a minute after I wipe them, and so I let the dust collect. I endure. For some reason I think, *it's not so bad; it could be worse.*

Kantara, an unlikely town in mid-desert, arrived at late in the afternoon. As soon as I jump down with my Air France bag and the package for my cousin Shlomo, the flies come at me. I start to ask around in the customs house, which is being used as Headquarters. Dirt, machine-guns lying on tables, plastic maps tacked on the wall, someone taking apart a short-wave receiver, some-

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one in bathing trunks and rubber sandals reading *Time*. I feel their lethargy, induced by long residence here, opposing itself to a weird excitement of mine—expectation no doubt, the aura before doing a good deed. No one knows who Shlomo is. Finally a captain shows up, looks over my pass slowly, and then turns the pages of his order book. "Yes. It says here he's been reassigned to an outpost down on Great Bitter Lake." "Can I go there now?" I ask, and having asked know I shouldn't have. The captain is my age, but very tough-looking, cleft-chinned, and my question seems to have solved his problem of sizing me up. By his bearing he stands out from his men like a professional among amateurs. Willing to bet he's a career soldier. His dark blond hair is clipped close to the skull in the West Point manner. There's something else, too, that he has that no one else has: a large leather casing for his wristwatch, inlaid with a red and gold likeness of a sword entwined by an olive branch. From a distance it appears to be a centurion's bracelet. It is thoroughly pagan, an ornament and a symbol of authority, and it scares me sufficiently to make me decide I won't be frightened by it.

"Very sorry. There's only one transport daily. At dawn." In the moment between the end of my question and his response I had become certain he would say that.

"Good," I tell him. "I'll need a place for the night."

"There are some extra cots upstairs."

I'm not dissatisfied with the tone I managed to take with him, but upstairs the disappointment of not finding my cousin after that trip begins to bother me. I put my head under a faucet (there is no shower) and discover that I can't wash the grit out of my hair and eyes. The fluffy white towel filched from the Paris Hilton that I have brought along comes away from my face brown. I stretch out irritably on a cot, in the still, palpable heat. There are no screens on the windows and a swarm of flies buzz in at me as if directed by intelligence. The more I brush them away the more belligerent they become. Finally, though I would like nothing better than to sleep, I am driven downstairs, and then outdoors.

PROBABLY Kantara looks worse today than the day after the war swept through it. A year of neglect in this latitude has a disastrous effect. The Army seems to do no more than is necessary for its own maintenance. The only Arabs in evidence are some old men playing shesh-besh in a coffeehouse; they look up at me as I pass. Bullet shells still lie in the streets, the barbed wire rusts, the masonry of buildings, even those undamaged by artillery, is cracked and peeling. Gorgeous hibiscus flowers rising out of the weeds symbolize the corruption.

I select a wide street that aims directly toward another sunset, figuring it must lead me to the Canal . . . and in a short time I am there. Two soldiers, armed schoolboys, sit on country club-type wicker chairs in the shade of a shack on which a homemade Israeli flag is nailed facing Africa. The Canal is no wider than the length of a large swimming pool, its water green and clear. A few hundred yards south the crazily bent girders of a dynamited draw-bridge, and on the other side what seems to be a continuation of town, with no sign of life. I am hot and filthy, I would now like very much to take a swim. Too late, says the corporal in charge. It used to be done, if you kept close to the concrete embankment, but last month someone in the water was wounded by a sniper, and that was the end of the swimming. With the corporal's binoculars I can make out an Egyptian soldier sitting under a tree, a good deal further from his side of the canal than the Israelis are from theirs. He is reading a newspaper.

"Are they giving passes to tourists now?" the corporal asks me. He is a stocky boy with freckles and the beginnings of a ginger-colored mustache.

"I'm not a tourist. I'm bringing some cookies to my cousin, down on the Great Bitter Lake."

"They gave you a pass for that?"

"Well, I used my press card."

"You're a reporter?" asks the other, a buck private who wears glasses and a skullcap pinned to his hair.

"Yes."

"What do you write about?" the corporal says. "Israel?"

"Sometimes."

"Do you write favorable things?"

"Some favorable, some not. Mostly favorable."

"If you can think of something favorable to say about Kantara, I'd appreciate your telling me."

"*Eh*, it's not so bad," says the private with a rising gesture of his fingers. "We have no Fatah here, Praise the Name."

"I'm not complaining, it's just that nothing ever happens here," the corporal explains. "Every day the sun comes up, and fourteen hours later it goes down. In between all you can do is spit up in the air and catch it."

"What about the UN people? Don't you fraternize with them?" A blue flag hangs limply on a substantial, shabby villa nearby, this side of the canal.

"No. We have nothing to do with them. They're just here for the money."

"I see. What about you," I ask the private, "don't you have a girlfriend on the other side who rows over at midnight? Fatimah or somebody?"

"No, no girl friend." The idea seems to embarrass him, of all things. Underneath his old rabbi's gestures is an innocence that reminds me of the Baptist student in Jerusalem.

"How long have you been here?" I ask him.

"Three months already."

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I interrogate them in order to divert my attention from the pestilent flies, which are inescapable.

"So nothing ever happens here. I hope I don't bring you any trouble. They say reporters bring trouble."

"Don't worry," the corporal assures me. "Actually the worst thing that can happen here, besides that guy getting shot in the water, is that some little kids write things on the walls. We chase them away if we catch them at it. About once a week the captain sends someone out to scrub the things off the walls."

"What kind of things?"

"Oh, things. 'Kill the Jews,' slogans like that."

I violently blow a fly out of my nose.

". . . mostly old folks and kids," the corporal is saying. "There used to be 20,000 people here, but now there are only about 700."

The private says, "It used to be the passage between Asia and Africa, this place. All the pilgrims to Mecca came through here. Say, do you play chess?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to play later on? There's a board and pieces up in the customs house."

"All right, if you want to."

The flies.

The private tells me, "It's better if you don't swipe at them. I almost went out of my mind the first few days too. You have to learn not to mind it when they crawl on your face."

"How long does it take to learn?"

"Wait, the sun will go down and they'll disappear."

So I WAIT—what else is there to do?—while the corporal, a journalist's dream, fills me in on every inconsequential event that has taken place in Kantara during his half-year stay. Nothing to do but sit and take it.

Around six o'clock the sun picks up speed. Now it's over that building, the next minute it has a red tinge and only its top half is visible, and then, suddenly, it's gone, there's only a fiery glow all along the horizon as if a city was burning out of sight. Incredibly, a blessed breeze stirs and chases off the flies.

"*Nu*; didn't I tell you?" the private says. I can only sigh. What truth, after all, in the notion that pleasure is the diminution of pain. The breeze becomes a gentle wind, moving the private's skullcap and extending the blue UN flag, earth in olive branch parentheses. Wavelets in the canal lap against the embankment, a peaceful sound. Even the corporal falls silent. The sky is turning from deep blue to black, the conflagration in the west is going out, the stars—the first I have ever seen in the desert—appear. Stars! Like those I saw on the screen of the planetarium at the Boston Museum of Science when I was a kid, and nowhere since. These must be the stars that set my very first hero, Joseph (he came before Ted Williams), dreaming.

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The Myth of American Affluence

Stephan Thernstrom

In 1958 John Kenneth Galbraith, as his publishers tell us, "added a new phrase to our language" by declaring that ours was an "affluent society." Median family income in the United States then was less than $4,000 per year. Soon after, the Eisenhower recession gave way to the Kennedy and Johnson boom, eight years which comprised the most dramatic and sustained economic spurt in the country's history. A newly-revised edition of *The Affluent Society** has recently appeared, at a time when the annual earnings of the average American family have almost reached the $8,000 mark. After taking inflation into account and putting the figures into constant dollars, we find that the real income of the ordinary citizen has risen fully 85 per cent in little more than a decade. If we were affluent in 1958, by now we must be Rockefellers all.

But how many Americans *feel* so very affluent? Why have what Galbraith dismissed as "the obsolete and contrived preoccupations associated with the assumption of poverty" not vanished altogether in a world "where the ordinary individual has access to amenities—foods, entertainment, personal transportation, and plumbing—in which not even the rich rejoiced a century ago"? If *The Affluent Society* "has changed the basic economic attitudes of our age," as the ad-men would have it, has it changed them for the better? I think not. The myth of American affluence has become the new conventional wisdom, and it constitutes a formidable obstacle to understanding our present condition.

Let it be said immediately that my concern here is not with Galbraith's analysis per se, but rather with the implications of the concept of affluence to which he gave currency. Ideas filter into the public consciousness in strange and distorted ways, and the element of distortion in the filtration process may have been particularly large in the case of *The Affluent Society*. What seemed to be the central point of the book was a sound one—that there was an appalling lack of "social balance" in the American economy, a glaring and indefensible disparity between the opulence of the private sector and the starvation level at which the public sector was forced to operate. Ours is a society in which "automobiles have an importance greater than the roads on which they are driven. We welcome expansion of telephone services as improving the general well-being but accept curtailment of postal services as signifying necessary economy. We set great store by the increase in private wealth but regret the added outlays for the police force by which it is protected. Vacuum cleaners to insure clean houses are praiseworthy and essential in our standard of living. Street cleaners to insure clean streets are an unfortunate expense. . . . Alcohol, comic books, and mouthwash all bask under the superior reputation of the market"; not so schools, judges, and municipal swimming pools.

This imbalance, Galbraith noted, worked to the special disadvantage of people in the lower income brackets, who were least able to afford substitutes for public services in the private market. America should make a determined effort to right the balance and to deal with the social needs the private market left unmet, an effort mindful of the fact that contemporary poverty was a structural problem which would not disappear with the application of traditional Keynesian remedies designed to maximize employment and output.

Something was very much wrong with American economic and social arrangements; a major new effort to intervene in the private economy to promote social justice was essential: such seemed to be the policy conclusions that were to be drawn from *The Affluent Society*. Thus it was that Galbraith's book came to be paired with Michael Harrington's *The Other America* as an influence which alerted President Kennedy to the problems of the poor and led him to initiate the planning that culminated in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

If the overt message of *The Affluent Society* was reformist, however, the real thrust of the book seemed to be at odds with the policy conclusions. What was most original and influential about Galbraith's work was his emphasis upon

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the remarkable material prosperity of the ordinary American citizen. The myth of American affluence which Galbraith helped to create mirrored the dominant political and social tendencies of the Age of Eisenhower. Whatever the author's intent, the book directed attention away from the economic deprivation which was still commonplace in the United States and provided the well-to-do with an intellectually respectable vantage point from which to criticize the materialistic strivings of the vulgar masses rather than the American social order itself. In recent years the mythology has undergone significant modification, with the rediscovery of poverty and the deepening racial crisis. Yet the assumption of affluence dies hard. It continues to influence popular perceptions of the nature of our society, and impedes the formation of political alignments which might bring about constructive social change.

In its original, pristine version, vintage 1950's, the myth of affluence held quite simply that poverty was no longer to be found in the United States. Some people had more money than others, to be sure, but even those with least of all were not too badly off. It was thought that the New Deal, supplemented by some mopping-up Fair Deal measures, had quite adequately taken care of the "one third of a nation" whose misery had attracted attention in the depression years. Presumably there had been a fundamental, some said revolutionary, shift toward greater equality of income distribution; presumably there was now a smoothly-functioning network of social services available to all as a matter of right. And there was new confidence in the productive potential of the private economy, ardent discussions of the wonders of "people's capitalism" and "the 20th-century capitalist revolution."

That Republican speechwriters believed all this is not surprising. But the mood was far more widespread. Symptomatic was Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s announcement that the successes of the Roosevelt and Truman years had been so complete as to render outmoded "quantitative liberalism," a liberalism concerned with such grubby, old-fashioned and easily-measured matters as wage rates, unemployment levels, and the number of substandard housing units. With all these issues nicely resolved already, the task of liberalism was to turn to Higher Things, and to advance programs aimed at improving the quality of American life.

The Affluent Society bears the marks of this cultural climate, and indeed was a prime source of the new perspective. This despite the later effect the book is supposed to have had in opening John Kennedy's eyes to the existence of poverty (the authority who notes this influence, incidentally, is none other than Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who discovered through the experience of the 1960's that "quantitative liberalism" was not so outmoded after all), and despite Galbraith's efforts in the new edition to make his discussion of poverty seem a good deal more prescient than in fact it was.

What is striking about the treatment of poverty in the 1958 edition of the book is how belatedly it came—in the twenty-third chapter—and how minor a problem Galbraith thought it to be. In so affluent a society, he remarked casually, poverty was not "a universal or massive affliction," but "more nearly an afterthought." Only one American family in thirteen had annual incomes of less than a thousand dollars, which he apparently deemed a reasonable boundary between poverty and affluence. Economic deprivation was not widespread, but instead was confined to two special categories of persons. There was "case poverty," which could be attributed to some quality peculiar to the individual or family involved —mental deficiency, bad health, excessive procreation, etc.—and there was "insular poverty," afflicting large groups of people inhabiting an especially unfavorable environment, such as the urban slum or the declining rural area. Galbraith did express concern over the unfortunate plight of this small minority of low-income families, and he noted that *general* advances in the Gross National Product would do very little to ameliorate structural poverty of this type. But it is doubtful indeed that this brief discussion, which assumed that only the 8 per cent of families with incomes below the $1,000 line were poor, and emphasized the special characteristics of those unhappy few, could have shocked any of the book's readers into new awareness of the shame of continued poverty in the midst of affluence.

Whether or not poverty in America as of 1958 was a mere "afterthought," Galbraith's consideration of the matter certainly seemed an afterthought. It would not be unfair, though perhaps unkind, to say that Galbraith and those who read him approvingly were far more distressed by the vulgar barbecue pits, television sets, and tailfins of the vast majority than by the sufferings of what they took to be a tiny minority. Conspicuous consumption, not economic deprivation, was the real villain. This was an affluent society, and Galbraith defined an affluent society as one in which the productive machinery churned out such vast quantities of goods that there was an enormous surplus left over after the "real" needs of its members were satisfied. New needs, "artificial" needs, thus had to be created to absorb the surplus: "many of the desires of the individual are no longer even evident to him" until they are "synthesized, elaborated, and nurtured by advertising and salesmanship."

Obviously there is some truth in this. The economic "needs" of Americans today and of the aborigines of New Guinea differ in kind, clearly,

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and it could be said that those of the latter are more "natural" (though primitive peoples too have their conspicuous consumption). All our economic desires are culturally conditioned, and deliberate attempts to shape and manipulate them through the media doubtless have their effect.

But it is not very illuminating, I think, to judge the behavior of American consumers against a standard derived from an image of man in a state of nature. It can provide a base for a lively and witty polemic, as was the case with Galbraith and his great predecessor, Thorstein Veblen, but a polemic which too easily can be converted to snobbish and self-serving ends, as happened with the myth of affluence. Galbraith's root conception—that the bulk of consumer desires in an advanced industrial society are socially created—derives squarely from Veblen, though in his brief discussion of Veblen, Galbraith curiously fails to note the influence.

VEBLEN WAS a genuine Puritan, whose profound distaste for the American way of spending stemmed from the mores of the strict Minnesota Norwegian subsistence farming community in which he was raised. And Galbraith, too, is something of an ascetic, perhaps because he too was a farm boy (unlikely though that seems today), and comes from another strict ethnic minority, the Canadian Scotch. Both men imbibed a stern ethical code with their mother's milk, and cast a cold eye on the gross, corpulent, consumer society in which they found themselves. Americans have too much, Americans have it too easy: these were the moral premises which underlay their pungent critiques. I find their conception of the good life rather too Spartan for my tastes, and believe that the validity of their economic analyses depends upon the validity of those moral premises. Still, Veblen and Galbraith came by their views honestly and adhered to them consistently.

What is troubling is the way in which Galbraith's attack upon the affluent society was picked up by those who did not have a similarly consistent moral position. The myth of American affluence became a weapon with which people who had attained a considerable measure of wealth expressed their scorn for those who had less and spent it vulgarly. Asceticism is one thing; asceticism *for others* something else. The notion that the ordinary American had more than enough income to meet his "real" needs but was being brainwashed by Madison Avenue to believe he needed costly and ugly inessentials—a mauve and cerise air-conditioned, power-steered, and power-braked automobile was Galbraith's example—became an article of faith in cultivated circles in the Age of Eisenhower. Often the loudest complaints against tailfins were voiced by people whose own Spartan mode of transportation was a Porsche. It was somewhat less anomalous to hear this from a VW owner, but not much less when he commonly took three-month rather than three-week vacations, and used what he saved on the VW to indulge in a sailboat or estate-bottled wine. I prefer VW's and sailboats myself (though I would like a Porsche even more), but I find it hard to view the choice as evidence of my moral superiority.

When *The Affluent Society* was first published there were very few Americans who lived in truly Asiatic poverty, crammed eight or ten to a room in houses without clean water and modern plumbing, subsisting on rice or potatoes, with infant mortality rates of 400-500 per 1,000 and a life expectancy of twenty years or so. Poverty in the absolute subsistence sense was virtually, though not entirely, obliterated; the "real" needs of even the poorest were being satisfied. But the distinction between "real" and "artificial" needs was irrelevant and unreal. In 1958, 60 per cent of all families and unrelated individuals in the United States earned less than $6,000, and more than a third took in less than $4,000. The top 20 per cent of income earners, meanwhile, were raking in nearly half of the total, with 20 per cent of it going to the richest 5 per cent. The needs of the bottom 60 per cent were surely as "real" as the needs of those on the top, a good deal more real in the sense that the people on the bottom had a far harder time making ends meet. The myth of affluence encouraged the complacent illusion that poverty had been eliminated and that unequal distribution of income was no longer a problem. The problem was rather that the masses were lusting after the bread and circuses devised by the ad-men. Few of those who mouthed the clichés about American affluence felt *themselves* to be blessed with excessive income. The assumption was that others were not sufficiently spiritual to make proper use of their undue affluence.

THE 50's now seem far behind us, their social thought about as remote from our present concerns as that of the Jazz Age. Nothing is heard any longer about the need to substitute "qualitative" for "quantitative" liberalism, and poverty is the subject of endless discussion (if not much action). *The Affluent Society*, in its current incarnation, has smoothly adjusted to the changed intellectual climate. The reference in the 1958 edition to poverty as an afterthought in a country "with a weekly industrial wage of eighty dollars and a $3,960 median family income," has been deleted. The 1969 edition declares that in a country "with a weekly industrial wage of $110 and a $7,974 median family income, [poverty] can no longer be presented as a universal or massive affliction." Industrial wages have risen nearly 40 per cent and median family income doubled (with prices up only 16 per cent). Nevertheless poverty seems to have become more an obsession than an afterthought.

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Alice and the Red Queen would appreciate the logic of this.

The change is for the better, despite my mocking reference to Alice, for in dealing with poverty in a society like ours it is necessary to run very fast merely to stand still. Galbraith, and Americans generally, have slowly come to realize that in an advanced industrial society poverty is a *relative*, not an absolute, matter. A family earning $2,900 a year, a little below the current poverty line established by the federal government, would have been quite well-off by the standards of 1900, even after adjustments to take into account the lower price level. Even in 1929 they would have been fairly prosperous; well over half of the population earned under $3,000 (in 1962 dollars) then. But this is no consolation at all, for their needs have been shaped in this society today. There is no divinely-ordained standard of adequacy for housing, diet, medical care, education, entertainment, etc. What feels adequate is inescapably dependent upon what is available to others in the society.

There is no better evidence of this than the long series of efforts, dating back to the late 19th century in the United States, to establish coldly objective minimum subsistence budgets for families. Numerous attempts were made to specify an absolute minimum figure necessary for the satisfaction of "real" needs, uncontaminated by changing societal assumptions about what was possible. Had these attempts succeeded, they would necessarily have revealed steady progress toward the elimination of poverty, given the dramatic growth of the Gross National Product over time and the absence of increased inequality in income distribution. But they disclosed nothing of the sort, for the estimates of the absolute minimum income required for bare subsistence crept steadily upward, in close correspondence with the rising GNP. Indeed, there was a striking tendency for the minimum subsistence figure at any point to approximate closely one half of the median family income.

YET IF A new awareness of the economic plight of the bottom quarter or so of the income distribution pyramid has developed in recent years —the notion that virtually all Americans are affluent enough to satisfy their "real" needs with plenty left over for foolish luxuries is heard no more—an element of the myth of affluence is still very much with us. This is the myth of the affluent worker and the trade-union Establishment. For the assumption of the 50's that the ordinary citizen was prosperous, indeed too prosperous for his own good, we have substituted a view that is little more sophisticated. There are the very poor, the underclass (erroneously thought to be composed mainly of blacks), and there are the affluent, the latter including even the most menial white-collar employees and organized blue-collar workers. Some of the affluent—upper-middle-class liberals—understand that it is the duty of the rich to help the poor, and are happy to do so, especially when it can be accomplished by measures which, like "community control," have no effect on the rich themselves. The organized working class, however, and the *lumpen-bourgeoisie* remain stubbornly oblivious of their duty and selfishly attached to their privileges—the new Mustang, the two-family dwelling in Queens. They "indulge themselves" in annoying and unnecessary strikes, and display an unaccountable responsiveness to the Mario Procaccinos, even the George Wallaces, abroad in the land. These presumably are people without serious economic problems, but they lack the grace to behave with the political highmindedness appropriate to their station.

It is not my purpose, I need hardly say, to defend the choice of a Procaccino, a Louise Day Hicks, a George Wallace. But it is very important to understand why their supporters feel as they do—an understanding which the trade-union baiting so fashionable in some quarters today makes very difficult. The concept of relative deprivation cannot be introduced to demonstrate the poverty of those earning less than $3,000 and then dropped in favor of an absolute standard when considering the position of people a rung or two higher up the economic ladder, so that the carpenter or factory worker supporting a family of five on $6,000 or $7,000 a year is suddenly seen as an established fat cat with more money than he knows what to do with. It is common in upper-middle-class circles to bemoan the outrageous wages commanded by skilled workers, so much so that the plumber problem has become the servant problem of our time. But the median earnings of skilled craftsmen employed full-time in the United States in 1966, the most recent year for which data are available, were only $6,981, a princely income only to those who have never attempted to live on it. It is hardly surprising that people scraping by on the wages provided by most unionized blue-collar or menial white-collar jobs feel embittered when they encounter the assumption that poverty shades into comfortable affluence at the $3,000 or $4,000 line, or the equally common belief that economic deprivation in this society is confined largely to Negroes. Nor is it surprising that many are fearful, rigidly defensive, and punitive about the blacks who seem to threaten them, with the support of upper-middle-class liberals.

THERE MAY indeed be genuine conflicts of interest between the underclass, and the middle mass of organized workers and lower white-collar employees. The racism of many of the craft unions, for example, stems from a scarcity psychology which has been confirmed by cruel experience. It will take more than the

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radical's wishful thinking about a coalition of progressive forces to bring such an alignment into existence, and I have no magical new formula to unveil here. But I would insist on both moral and political grounds that intellectuals on the Left must broaden their concern, to embrace not only the very poor but those who, through painful struggle, have inched a short rung or two up the slippery ladder of success. If the upper working class and lower middle class conceive of themselves as "forgotten men," and ally themselves with Nixon or worse, it is hard to see where the political muscle necessary for constructive social change can come from.

THE FUNDAMENTAL domestic problem of American society is inequality, inequality in wealth, political power, and social privilege, and more than an underclass of 20 or 25 per cent of the population suffers from that inequality. Future efforts to eliminate poverty, if they are to be morally sound and politically viable, must be part of a larger effort to eliminate the major sources of inequality in our affluent, stratified society.

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Observations

Biblical Legends

David Daiches

LET ME BEGIN with three quotations. One is from Marvin Pope's introduction to his edition of the Book of Job in the Anchor Bible: "The Bible cannot be properly studied or understood apart from its background and environment which comprises the whole ancient Near East." The second is from Stanley Cook's *Introduction to the Bible* (1945): "The study of the Bible involves some fourteen or more centuries of ancient history: it enters into studies of myth and legend, religion, custom and law, prehistoric man and ancient history, archaeology and the monuments, anthropology and sociology, primitive and scientific ideas of the universe, men's thoughts about things, and the validity both of their ways of thinking and of our own." The third is from Erasmus: "By identifying the new learning with heresy, you make orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance."

A book which for many centuries was seen by adherents of two great religions as the true Word of God is now seen to be a collection of diverse works of very different dates intimately related to (as well as in some significant respects interestingly different from) a great mass of other literature and mythology emanating from the same part of the world which produced that book. But we now go further than that. It is not only "the whole ancient Near East" which is involved. We can turn to Comparative Folklore, as Sir James Frazer did, in order to throw light on beliefs and customs recorded in the Bible, and so bring in the Maoris of New Zealand, the Pelew Islanders, the aboriginal Kurnai tribe of Gippsland in Victoria, Australia, the Papagos of southwestern Arizona, the Cora Indians, the Chiriguanos of Bolivia, and any number of African, Indian, and classical and medieval European legends and ceremonies, not to mention English nursery-rhymes, Scottish ballads, and contemporary superstitions.

If we repudiate this knowledge as an aid to the study of the Bible we are obscurantists; if we say that esteem for the Bible as a unique source of divinely revealed law, history, and prophecy cannot tolerate the use of such knowledge we come up against Erasmus's warning; yet if we use that knowledge impartially the Bible emerges as deeply and essentially a human document, illustrating differing stages of belief and the persistence or modification or transmogrification of all kinds of primitive superstitions and customs and rituals in a way that rules out sudden revelation or consistent adherence by its authors to a single, homogeneous body of beliefs and practices.

ONE CAN, of course, preserve a religious respect for the Bible by seeing it as the repository of some sort of "progressive revelation," though I am never sure how far the arguments generally used in developing this position are not equally applicable to any great literature. Theodor Gaster, who is nothing if not sophisticated in his handling of the biblical text, and who combines Hebrew scholarship with wide learning in comparative religion and (let me spell this with capitals, since he always does) Comparative Folklore, prefaces his encyclopedia of analogies between biblical passages and extra-biblical folklore and custom* with an introduction in which he tries to play down the significance for religion of these parallels:

> It is not to be supposed that when ancient mythological stories are used in the Old Testament they were necessarily interpreted by the Scriptural writers within their primal frame of reference. To name but one significant point of difference, mythological characters (like demons and dragons) which originally represented independent powers in a world not yet regarded as a systematic cosmos have somehow to be subsumed to the overarching authority of Yahweh and to be depicted as elements within the economy of his dispensation. But it is just this plasticity which gives the old myths their continuing validity and relevance, and which makes the mythic mode of expression the supreme vehicle for the living Word of God. In many and divers ways has God spoken to our fathers . . . and still speaks.

So how does this work? Consider Psalm 29, a terrific description of a storm, which is included, for some reason, in the Sabbath Eve service (the reason given in the Talmud is that the seven "voices of the Lord" mentioned in the Psalm correspond to the seven Sabbath-benedictions, but this is a blatant piece of post-hoc rationalization). As long ago as 1935 H. L. Ginsberg presented this psalm as a Yahwistic adaptation of an older Canaanite hymn to Baal, the storm-god, and this is now widely accepted.

> In the *Poem of Baal*, the story is told that god, after defeating the monster Yam (Sea) was acclaimed king of the gods and how, duly installed in an especially constructed palace, he received the adoration of his divine subjects. The *Poem of Baal*, like its Mesopotamian and Hittite counterparts, was in all probability the cult-myth of a seasonal festival, its main episodes corresponding to the main stages of the ritual. In both cases the pattern is the same: the god of the weather defeats a rebellious dragon or monster, thereby acquires dominion and is installed in a new palace: and in both cases the occasion is marked by the recitation of a paean rehearsing his glory and prowess.

Thus Gaster, who concludes that "Psalm 29 is a form of the ritual laudation of the victorious god which formed part of the seasonal

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pantomime of the New Year Festival." But he goes on:

> It must be emphasized, however, that this in no way implies that the seasonal pantomime actually obtained in official Israelitic cultus, as has been so frequently supposed. All that we are here suggesting is that certain hymnodic patterns, derived from these earlier usages, survived in literary convention. . . . At the same time, we would not deny that the survival often involved more than a mere persistence of forms. Evidence is increasing daily that many of the psalms were conscious and deliberate Yahwizations of current "pagan" compositions; and we believe that this was the case in the present instance.

The psalm opens with the lines *habu layhwh bene 'elim, habu layhwh kabod wa'oz,* which literally means "Ascribe to Yahweh, sons of gods, Ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength." "The psalm begins," explains Gaster, "with an invocation to the *bene elim* or members of the pantheon, to pay homage to Yahweh." But if *elim* are really gods, members of the pantheon inferior to Yahweh, then the psalm is a polytheistic poem. Gaster is quite specific in this interpretation. "These lesser gods are invited to ascribe unto Yahweh 'the glory of His name.'" And we are told that in the Babylonian poem *Enuma Elish* "it is the company of the gods who render homage to Marduk after his victory." So that is what is really going on, even though of course the "Yahwization" of the psalm means that we must interpret the sons of god as the angelic host. "The angels, standing in God's immediate presence and watching the storm, are called upon by the poet to praise Him whose glory is seen in the storm." That is the explanation not of Gaster but of the late Rabbi J. H. Hertz, who was Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazim in Britain at the same time that Gaster's father was Haham of the Sephardim.

Let me quote another Orthodox Jewish account of this psalm: "A thrilling description of a storm—a verbal symphony in which the shattering peals of thunder, reverberating round the hills, are reproduced in words with realistic effect. A Hebrew poet, however, could not rest satisfied with a word picture. His religious genius induced him to interpret the thunderclaps as the majestic voice of God" (A. Cohen, *The Psalms,* The Soncino Books of the Bible).

But if the psalm is a Hebrew adaptation of a Canaanite hymn to Baal, the storm-god, then the imagination which equated the voice of thunder with the voice of God (the most memorable part of the poem) does not derive from the Hebrew religious genius at all; that genius is occupied in "Yahwizing" the psalm, and even then this is not done completely, for the phrase "sons of god" (which means simply "O gods"), even though we translate it "sons of the mighty" or in some such way, retains disturbing polytheistic overtones as of course do so many similar phrases in the Hebrew Bible. I am not questioning the significance of the parallel between the hymn to Baal and the psalm as we have it. I am suggesting that the religious and ethical significance of the process of "Yahwization" requires much more detailed study, and that if a process such as is apparently involved in Psalm 29 reveals, as Gaster says in his introduction, "the living Word of God," I want to know exactly what is meant by that phrase and exactly what was God's relationship to the pagan author of the original hymn.

I do not make this point out of mischief. I am really interested to learn how Jews can continue to regard the Hebrew Bible (I prefer this phrase to the Old Testament, which has unacceptable theological implications as well as representing a confusion between two meanings of the Greek word *diatheke*) as a unique source of divine revelation in view of what we now know about its development. Orthodoxy —at least European Jewish orthodoxy—solves the problem by taking the risk that Erasmus talked of: you will find no mention of Canaanite hymns to Baal in Gateshead Yeshiva or even in Jews' College, London. Gaster's father, like mine, would apply linguistic and comparative scholarship to any field except to the sacred biblical text.

I had occasion the other day to look up the article on "Gipsies" in the great eleventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. It was written by Rabbi Dr. Moses Gaster, the Haham, president of the Folklore Society of England, formerly lecturer at Oxford in Slavonic and Byzantine literature, an authority on Rumanian popular literature, and an Orthodox—I had almost written grimly Orthodox—Jew in the strictest rabbinical tradition.

> Leaving aside the doubtful passages in the Byzantine writers where the Athinganoi are mentioned, the first appearance of Gipsies in Europe cannot be traced positively further back than the beginning of the 14th century. Some have believed that a passage in what was erroneously called the Rhymed Version of Genesis of Vienna, but which turns out to be the work of a writer before the year 1122, and found only in the Klagenfurt manuscript, referred to the Gipsies. . . .

This is from Theodor Gaster's father's classic article on the Gipsies. But the combination of searching and free-flowing scholarship—moving freely among linguistic, bibliographical, and historical and folkloristic elements—could never have been applied by him with that freedom, and that free rein given to curiosity, to the text of the Bible, and certainly not to the Pentateuch, carried around and kissed weekly by the Orthodox as the veritable word of God.

So Theodor Gaster comes by his combination of scholarly interests honestly, but, unlike his father, he applies them to the central documents of his own religion, with only the most general affirmation that somehow God's word is not put in question in spite of the voluminous citing of evidence which puts the biblical text in a continuing and *non-special* context. Of course it may be argued that it is naive to expect absolute and total uniqueness in the transmission of divine revelation, on the grounds that God works in history through the developing human material as it acts according to its own laws. But such an argument, it seems to me, would logically imply a sort of

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literary pantheism, a view that sees divine revelation in any ethically illuminating work of literature. That the Hebrew Bible provides special kinds of ethical illumination that are to be sharply contrasted with, say, what we find in the Hellenic tradition, can be argued, but only if we make a very special selection from the biblical canon.

In his extremely interesting and searching article in the July COMMENTARY, "Hebraism and Hellenism Now," Milton Himmelfarb cites some of the ethical aspects of Hebraism which contrast favorably with Hellenism, and he is right as far as he goes. But there is a great deal in the Bible that he is silent about, that is vicious and cruel and murderous. I think that there is a case for maintaining that if you believe in capital punishment (which I do not) then everybody in society should be personally involved in inflicting it rather than having it done behind closed doors by a professional hangman, yet the popular stonings by the congregation of, for example, the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath seem to me to represent an awful barbarity. The slaughterings that accompanied the Israelite conquest of Canaan, the ritual slaying of Agag, the appalling story of the Levite who chopped his faithless concubine up into twelve parts, and many other stories of superstitious savagery that are found in the Bible, can best be explained as survivals of primitive ways of feeling and acting that are testimony to the historical reality underlying the Bible story. The Bible is anthropologically fascinating, historically significant, linguistically a mine of information, a marvelous repository of ancient myth and literature, but (it seems to me) ethically and religiously it is a record of man discovering the kind of God he wants to believe in: man's evolving word about God, not God's fixed word about man.

II

GASTER'S BOOK represents, in his own words, "an attempt to gather into one place all that can be derived from Comparative Folklore and mythology for the interpretation of the Old Testament." It incorporates large sections of Sir James Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament*, with additions and expansions by Gaster. It is "designed primarily as a work of reference" rather than as a book to be read through, and it is based "on a card file, now running to more than 17,000 items, which I have been assembling for the past thirty-five years." The card file is all too evident. Each item is presented independently, with many repetitions, sometimes of identical sentences, usually without cross-references. Thus in the discussion of Psalm 29 already referred to, the Yahwizing of a pagan hymn is defended on the analogy of Rowland Hill's remark that "the Devil shouldn't have the best tunes," and a reference to Professor Soothill's reminiscence of having heard children in India singing "Buddha loves me: this I know, For the Sutras tell me so." Twenty pages later, in talking about Psalm 93, he again quotes Rowland Hill and again cites the two lines heard by Professor Soothill in India. This is no significant blemish in a work meant to be looked up paragraph by paragraph, though it would have been more valuable, as well as more readable, if it had been welded together into an integrated narrative.

More serious is the repetition of actual errors (which appear to be misprints). In the introduction Gaster refers to the device of giving characters of a story "arbitrary or invented names significant of their roles." "One recalls at once," he continues, "Aristophanes' Lysistrata, 'Madame de Mobilization,' who seeks to 'bring the boys back home' from the Peloponnesian War." This is repeated on page 73: "Thus, in the comedies of Aristophanes, the woman who leads a sex strike to 'bring the boys back home' from the Peloponnesian War is called Lysistrata, as if 'Madame de Mobilization.'" But this, of course, is nonsense. Lysistrata is "Madame Demobilization," the Greek *lysis* meaning "a loosing, setting free," from the verb *lyo*, "to loose," which every schoolboy who has had to struggle with Greek conjugations knows only too well, and *stratos* meaning "army." This is only one piece of evidence that Gaster has been content to let someone assemble his index cards without himself paying too much attention to the individual entries once they appeared in print.

Then there is the larger question of the degree of illumination which can be obtained by citing scores of parallels or analogies or even faint resemblances to such things as the biblical story of the flood, the building of the tower of Babel, and many others. The fifty pages of flood analogies are very wearisome; the essential point could have been made in five pages or less, and as we wade through the flood stories of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Turks, the Lithuanians, the Finns, the Punjabis, the Burmese, the Malays, the Dyaks, the Melanesians, the North American Indians, the Central American and Mexican Indians, and many others, we begin to recognize the justice of some of the complaints made against Frazer—for most of this material comes from him—that he was content with an uncritical piling up of analogues.

Much of Gaster's own material, fascinating though it often is, is admittedly conjectural. "I have made a special point . . . of trying to illustrate images and metaphors from folklore." (He is talking here of his interpretation of the Minor Prophets as sustained satire of seasonal festivals, from which the prophets ironically drew their metaphors.) "Admittedly, this involves a process of reading into the texts (*eisegesis*) as well as out of them (*exegesis*), and the danger of subjectivism is ever-present; but this is, in the last analysis, a danger implicit in attributing meaning to anything, and the notion that there is such a thing as the objective interpretation of literature or art is—at least to me—itself meaningless, the tired cliché of tired scholars." I find this remark puzzling, because surely the purpose of bringing in Comparative Folklore and the other tools which Gaster uses is precisely to provide a check on irresponsibly subjective personal interpretations by saying "Look, *this* is what the metaphor means, it is *this* primitive ritual that explains this image, it is our knowledge of *this* particular cus-

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tom among so many other peoples that leads us to interpret this passage in this way."

Yet one understands Gaster's caution. One has only to imagine the use of the same tools in interpreting some modern social customs (for example, the playing of golf) to realize how wildly they could lead one to err. One of the favorite kinds of competition in British literary weeklies is to invite competitors to apply the tools of the anthropologist to some item in our civilization discovered far in the future: I have read some hilarious yet in themselves wholly plausible interpretations. The danger is even greater in using etymology. Nobody today would dream of explaining the meaning of "hysteria" in the light of its derivation from the Greek word for "womb" and the odd theory which at one time associated hysteria with the womb. The present meaning of the word has nothing to do with its etymology: there is no surviving folk belief about hysteria being produced by a wandering womb, yet one could imagine a future anthropologist deducing such a belief from the etymology of the word.

One could cite hundreds of examples of modern English words where an attempt to explain their present meaning in the light of their etymology would be disastrous. Just how illuminating is it, therefore, to be told that the word translated as "created" in the first verse of Genesis is originally a craftsman's word: "to create meant simply to give shape and form, and all the Hebrew words which are so rendered derive from the vocabulary of handicraft, and refer primarily to the paring of leather, the moulding of clay and the like." This is helpful to the linguist, but does it necessarily tell us anything about what the word had come to mean for the author of Genesis? But perhaps Gaster would say that he is not concerned with what the word had come to mean for the author of Genesis. Yet if his book is not concerned with what the Bible stories mean, what is it concerned with?

THE FACT seems to be that Gaster has no absolutely consistent end in view. At one point—in his account of the competition between Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel—he seeks "to reconstruct the incident as it may really have occurred," and he goes on to present the story as "essentially, a competition in rain-making during a period of drought." But in fact, though he abundantly illustrates the background of the story by reference to Comparative Folklore and Religion, we are left quite in the dark as to what actually occurred: indeed, he rejects the common explanation that Elijah produced fire for his altar by some deliberate hocus-pocus, pointing out that he could not have used the sun in some way to kindle the fire because the incident occurred in the late afternoon when the sun would not have been strong enough to work such a trick. So what happened? We are not told. It is not, in fact, Gaster's general practice to use his tools in order to reconstruct the historical fact underlying the biblical account of a particular incident, and the reference here to "the incident as it may really have occurred" is unique in his book. His concern is more often to illuminate habits of thought and behavior and linguistic usage by reference to folk customs, rituals, and myths that can be paralleled both in other Near Eastern cultures and throughout the world. More often than not he goes out of his way to avoid historical reconstruction. Of course it is unfair to reproach Gaster with not doing what he had no intention of doing. But every now and again he seems to be using his tools to get behind the story as told, to something else, and why should not that something else be history as often as myth? Or a mixture of both? But in fact Gaster's concern is more the remythologizing than the demythologizing of the Bible.

It is part of the great value of Gaster's book that it raises more questions than it can answer. I hope that my limited exploration of some of these questions has not seemed querulous. I have read right through his 899 pages (including the detailed bibliographies) with enormous profit. This is the raw material of a really important book, and I hope that one day Gaster will write it.

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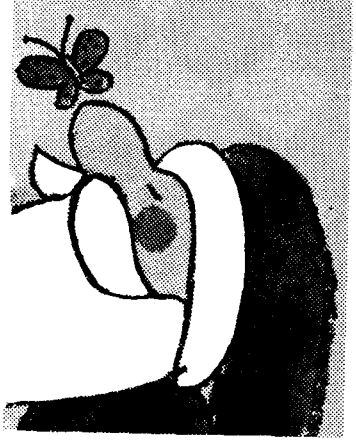

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Moon Watching

Neil Compton

IN THE very week that technology achieved its apotheosis in the moon landings, *Life* devoted pride of place on the cover and inside the issue of July 18 to a strikingly different phenomenon—the rural youth communes which are the latest mutation of the hippie movement. This fortuitous juxtaposition opposed two incompatible ideals which have coexisted uneasily within the fabric of American culture from the earliest days, and now threaten to tear it apart.

The astronauts incarnate the fantasies of a whole generation of science fiction addicts, whether fed by comic books, films, or novels. Long before Apollo XI, we knew how to recognize their type of standardized, clean-cut good looks ("absolute nobodies," Marshall McLuhan called them), their inarticulateness except in the language of masculine bonhomie and the laconic jargon of space, their machinelike precision and self-discipline, and their space suits which might have been designed by a comic book da Vinci such as Rick Yager. Only their extraterrestial sex life falls seriously below the standards set by fiction.

Armstrong, Collins, and Aldrin are also orthodox American heroes in a tradition that has been adumbrated lately by such scholars as Leo Marx (*The Machine in the Garden*) and Leslie Fiedler (*Love and Death in the American Novel; Waiting for the End*). They have both the hard, driving separateness and will to power of the technological ethos as described by Marx, and the boyishness, the proclivity for male companionship, and the anti-erotic aura of Fiedler's classic American he-man.

John Olson's lyrical photographs of an unidentified commune somewhere " in the woods" just as vividly recall another potent American myth described by Leo Marx—the dream of plenty amidst the primal innocence of a lush garden. (Of course, we learn from the text which accompanies the photographs that the plenty is no more than a dream, so far: few communes are genuinely self-sufficient, and last winter was brutal.) The long tresses, beards, buckskin jackets, and ankle-length dresses of the communards could as easily belong to 1869 as to 1969. However, the sensuous tenderness of the human relationships suggested by Olson's photographs may derive from a more characteristically contemporary ideal. The Esalen Institute rather than Brook Farm or the Shakers seems the most likely inspiration for the socio-sexual ordering of this community. Certainly, it is at the other extreme from the hard isolated individualism of the astronauts, each encased in a garment which, we are informed, is virtually its own self-sufficient spacecraft. Contemplating the rapt, naked—almost religious—intimacy of one communal family portrait, I couldn't help thinking of the remark of Paul Haney (once the voice of Mission Control) that "the adjustment of astronaut families to father and his fame" usually involves learning to "live without father. More than one astronaut wife has had to concede that she is a wife only on paper."

DOES THIS sort of knowledge help to explain why many (most?) of us felt less emotion than we felt we ought to feel about so stupendous an achievement? President Nixon got it all wrong in his touchingly absurd speech of welcome to the three brave "guys" aboard the *Hornet*. Even without Billy Graham to remind them of the first Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, few of Nixon's audience of millions would have agreed with him that "this is the greatest week in the history of the world since the Creation. Because of what happened in this week, the world is bigger, infinitely." My own world, at any rate, seems to remain as depressingly circumscribed as ever. Similarly, Nixon's gallant persiflage about Jan and Joan and Pat, "three of the greatest ladies and most courageous ladies in the whole world," seemed inconsistent not only with his own apocalyptic sentiments, but also with the whole promethean spirit of the space program.

The President's inadequacy to the occasion was hardly more evident than that of almost everyone else who appeared before the camera during this greatest international television orgy in history. Apart from two awe-inspiring hours of flickering black-and-white from the moon, the marathon 31-hour telecast of the landing (a world's record for continuous TV transmission) was a bore—no less tedious for exerting a hypnotic fascination upon glassy-eyed viewers. (In any case, most TV addicts had no alternative program on which to feed their habit.) Much of the boredom was unavoidable; hard facts were scarce and unsimulated visuals nonexistent. However, this very lack of action helped to focus attention upon the falseness and triviality of most human responses to the event. Whatever the case, television transmitted a distorted version of what was happening, and encapsulated the illusion in a cocoon of self-deceiving rhetoric.

The distortion, needless to say, was not deliberate but inevitable though not deliberate. As a medium, television is simply incapable of coping with the abstract and complex operations of so dispersed an organization as the Apollo moon project. As an audience, all but a tiny minority among us lack the mathematical and technical knowledge that would enable us to understand the operations even if they could be communicated. What everyone can understand is the human drama of two or three men braving an implacably hostile environment hundreds of thousands of miles from earth. The breathtaking beauty of our world as seen from space (so reassuring at a time when hatred of the human condition seems to be becoming endemic), weightless fun in the space capsule, and the spectacle of Old Glory planted on lunar soil—these are the elements of the adventure that television handled superbly and which kept us all glued to our sets.

However, I hope that I will not be accused of cynicism and disrespect if I suggest that the astronauts represent a new, 20th-century breed of somewhat unheroic heroes and that the United States government has not spent twenty odd billion dollars on the space program merely to give us the pleasure

NEIL COMPTON *is our regular television critic.*

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of watching tricks with weightless water or seeing the earth glow on the color screen like a large smoky marble.

THE ASTRONAUTS are usually compared with the heroic explorers and pioneer airmen of the past. Columbus, Magellan, Peary, Alcock and Brown, and Lindbergh are among the names most frequently mentioned. Aldrin, Armstrong, and Collins certainly yield to none of these in bravery and steadfastness of purpose, but their role in the moon adventure deprived them of most other attributes of true heroes. Throughout most of their voyage, the spacemen were not so much actors as acted upon. In space, as in modern warfare and even, increasingly, in modern sport, heroic individualism has given way to specialization, fragmentation of function, dispersal of command, and automated quantification. Apart from twenty admittedly vital seconds during which Armstrong had to decide whether to move the LM to a different landing spot on the moon, all important decisions during the Apollo XI flight were taken either by computers or by the staff at mission control. The love affair between the television cameras and these photogenic men thus falsifies an immense impersonal socio-technical process even more blatantly than a *Time* cover story used to do in the heyday of Henry Luce's cult of the business superman.

The American networks all celebrated the landing as an unalloyed triumph for the cause of peace and humanity. Neil Armstrong summed up this orthodox view of the event in his carefully chosen "first words" on the moon: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Much of the world seemed happily to share these sentiments. Viewers were whisked by Telstar to London, Rome, Tokyo, and other capitals for the glowing opinions of foreign statesmen and men in the street. The fact that neither the USSR nor China was joining in the party was mentioned frequently, more in sorrow than in anger.

Around the U.S. there was a good deal of sober talk about the need to re-order national priorities, but on the major networks only a few soreheads like Gloria Steinem and Charles Evers were brought forward to complain about the expense and the diversion of energy and talent, and to talk about poverty, racism, and urban renewal. Even the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, who had led a group of protesting poor people to Cape Kennedy, was so overwhelmed by the spectacle of the blast-off that he forgot his purpose and blurted out an unsolicited testimonial to the space program. The Vice-President talked confidently about landing on Mars. Most television newsmen seemed to find it hard to understand why joy in the event was unevenly distributed around the world. Even relative sophisticates such as Walter Cronkite or Eric Sevareid (not to mention simpler souls like Howard K. Smith) kept brooding over all the fun the Russian people were missing. They seem to have forgotten the origins of the Apollo program in the panic over Sputnik and the so-called missile gap. The space race has surely been something more sinister than a sort of technological Olympic Games. Don't Cronkite and Sevareid know as well as anyone that the same sort of computers which guide space craft to the moon are programmed to direct missiles to their targets in Russian or Chinese cities and that at this very moment they are controlling photographic satellites over Eastern Europe and Asia?

I was not able to monitor all three networks continuously, but I heard no mention of these obvious but disquieting facts on any American channel. Instead, there was the same kind of pseudo-dialogue that we used to hear about Vietnam before the flood of anti-war sentiment breached the networks' ideological dam. Platoons of prophets and pundits were paraded before the cameras, but there were no dissidents of the stature of (say) I. F. Stone, Lewis Mumford, Michael Harrington, or J. K. Galbraith. Anyone who wanted to hear such articulate and well-informed critics of NASA as Milton Viorst or Dr. Ralph C. Lapp would have had to switch north to Canada. It was on the CBC also that a physician associated with the Space Program de-

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clared that the elaborate disinfecting procedures carried out after splashdown were mere window dressing. If Mission Control had taken the possibility of lunar contamination seriously it would have had to quarantine the astronauts and their capsule for at least six months.

A TRIUMPH for technology, the moon landing represented a crushing defeat for human language. George Steiner's gloomy observations in *Language and Silence* about the inadequacy of words and grammar to cope with the complex mathematical formulations of scientific reality seem to be confirmed by the dismal failure of anyone to achieve an eloquence equal to the occasion. Archibald MacLeish's poem and Armstrong's first words were worthy if unsuccessful attempts, but Nixon's lunar phone call "has to be" considered not only "the most extraordinary" but also one of the most vacuous ever transmitted. The phrases which carried the biggest emotional charge during the week were such bits of routine jargon as "Go for cabin depressurization," "Lemme see if it will open up," or "OK Houston. I'm on the porch." Meanwhile, back on earth, most of the television guest experts wisely confined themselves to the discussion of technical and scientific matters.

This left the professional communicators with an awesome responsibility, made more onerous by the lack of visual distraction. I have always admired Walter Cronkite's reassuring avuncular articulateness under the most trying circumstances, but even he failed to keep his verbal cool during the most exciting moments of the long vigil. When it became clear that the motors had fired, and the LM was off the moon on its way to a rendezvous with the Columbia, his words came straight from the heart: "Oh boy! Hot diggety dog!" I can't think of anything that would have been more appropriate to say on this occasion. In some ways, it was downright endearing.

Nevertheless, if man does attempt to exploit this new frontier, the hideous vacuum of space may represent a serious threat to the humane values enshrined in language. Columbus's discovery of a brave new world was an act of physical and intellectual liberation. A hundred years later, John Donne could praise his naked mistress as "My America! My New Found Land!" In his "Epistle to Dr. Charleton" (1663) John Dryden celebrated Columbus not only as a hero of "free-born Reason," but also as a cleanser of language, rescuing men from their subjection to abstract, technical jargon—"hard words seal'd up with Aristotle's arms." It is hard to conceive of Neil Armstrong's achievement inspiring our descendants in quite this way. As Susan Sontag has shown in these pages,* to think creatively about the consequences of modern technology is almost inevitably to engage in "the imagination of disaster."

Perhaps that was why no earthlings tried to be funny about the moon flight except for a short BBC film (shown over CBS) demonstrating the space suit. I found the air of solemnity hard to take for long stretches. Fortunately, the moon of legend was not accorded the sacrosanct status of the moon of science. As Harry Reasoner said, in introducing an entertaining little essay by Andrew Rooney, the facts about the moon are not so interesting as the lore. The long waits between events would have been even harder to endure if it had not been for such amusing features as the anthologies of space movies broadcast by ABC and CBS, and NBC's spectacular films of jolly Russian spacemen cavorting weightlessly in two enormous docked capsules.

Steve Allen's little recital of songs at the piano (ABC) ran the gamut of sublunar lore in America from "Shine On, Harvest Moon" to "Moon River." It was fun until one began to think that these tender, foolish fragments from everybody's youth were now being consigned forever to the pre-history of the space age. A few days later, moon dust was being injected into the veins of 350 mice to determine whether it contained dangerous micro-organisms. Next time, I suppose it will be the turn of Stardust.

* "The Imagination of Disaster," October 1965.

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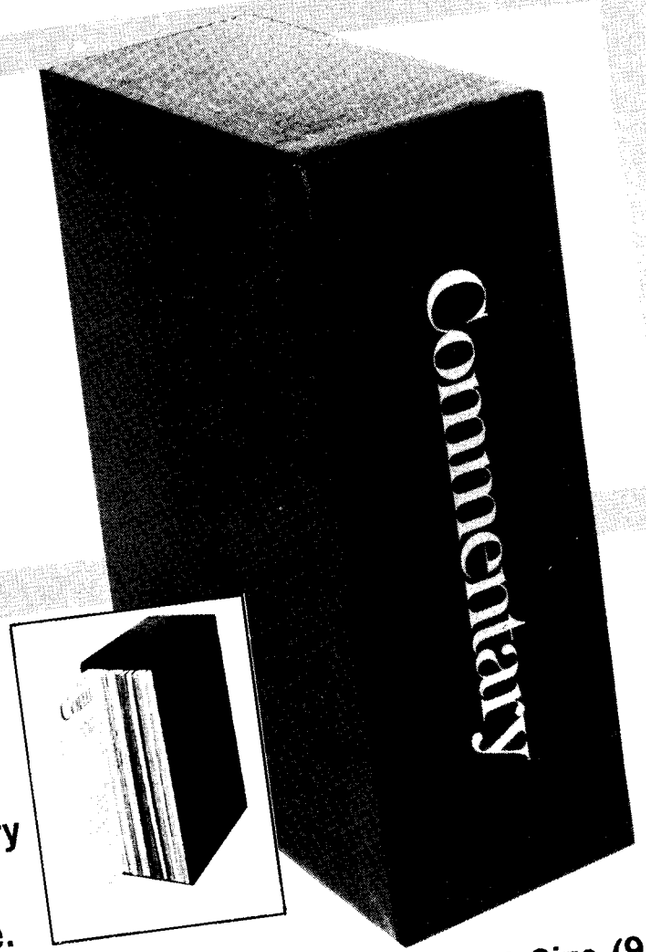

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Moviemakers

THE AMERICAN CINEMA: DIRECTORS AND DIRECTIONS, *1929-1968*. By ANDREW SARRIS. *Dutton. 383 pp. $2.95.*

Reviewed by PAUL WARSHOW

THE TITLE of Andrew Sarris's new book is really a misnomer. The appropriate title (although more awkward) would be *The English-Language Cinema*, for the book has individual sections not only for more than 160 basically American directors, but also for some English directors (Reed, Lean, Clayton, Richardson, Reisz, and a dozen others) and for several directors (Renoir, Ophuls, Clair, Bunuel, Clément, Antonioni, Truffaut, Polanski, et. al.) who, although basically foreign, have made one or more English-language films. But the main emphasis of *The American Cinema* is in fact on Hollywood. The book is a new version, greatly expanded and with many revisions, of a survey of directors which Sarris (now film critic for the *Village Voice*) published in *Film Culture* in 1963.

"King Vidor," writes Sarris, "is a director for the anthologies. He has created more great moments and fewer great films than any director of his rank." Something similar could be said of Sarris: he is a critic for the anthologies. At his best, in isolated paragraphs or, more often, sentences, he is a good critic or a good writer, and sometimes both at the same time. He can be very witty, as when he calls Mae West "a female impersonator who just happened to be a woman on the side." And many of his remarks can be quoted for their perceptiveness, accuracy, or even beauty: "[Roman Polanski's] *Repulsion* contains too much undigested clinical material for comfort"; "It is possible that Victor Seastrom was the world's first great director, even before Griffith and Chaplin"; "With Chaplin and Keaton we feel that we shall never see their like again. [Harold] Lloyd's spiritual facsimile is an even money bet to turn up at the next convention of the Shriners, the Rotarians, or the Elks." Sarris also has helpful things to say about the films of Chaplin, George Cukor, and Samuel Fuller, among others, and a few sections of the book—such as those on Tony Richardson and the Marx Brothers—seem to me excellent almost from beginning to end.

Yet for every sentence which can be quoted for its perceptiveness, clarity, grace, wit, or good sense, there are, I estimate, at least two which can be cited for the absence of these qualities. Here are a few examples: "[Hitchcock's] objects embody the feelings and fears of characters as object and character interact with each other in dramas within dramas"; "Paranoia is provided by Humphrey Bogart at the emotional expense of Gloria Grahame in *In a Lonely Place*"; "The mark of genius is an obsession with *irrelevant* detail" (my italics); "[Mankiewicz's] vibrant women—Susan Hayward . . . , Bette Davis, . . . Anne Baxter . . . [et. al.]—shine with special brilliance from midnight to the three o'clock in the morning of the soul."

Sometimes the writing is governed more by sound (i.e. alliteration, punning, and near-rhyme) than by sense: John Ford "made his movies both move and be moving"; "Elemental but not elementary, Boetticher's timing of action is impeccable"; "Garbo's pixilated speech in *Ninotchka* is pitched delicately between the comic and the cosmic, and in one breathtaking moment, Garbo and Lubitsch sway on the tightrope between grace and purpose."

IT IS TRUE that Sarris stands out among film critics—and especially among reviewers—for his willingness, even eagerness, to inquire into the relationship between a film's visual components (composition, editing, camera movement) and its meaning. But even here he is much more useful for the questions he implicitly raises, and for some of the "evidence" he brings in, than for his conclusions, which either are obscure or oversimplified or simply don't go very far. He tells us, for example, that Howard Hawks "consciously shoots most of his scenes at the eye-level of a standing onlooker" (the kind of information which, surprisingly only a very few critics besides Sarris care to, or have the knowledge to, give us) but then is lazy and half-hearted about showing us what this "means." He is much more illuminating on the relationship between Max Ophuls's camera movement and his world-view. But he doesn't acknowledge how limited and superficial Ophuls's world-view can be—or how the camera movement, when used on a banal un-Ophulsian Hollywood screenplay like the one for *The Reckless Moment*, becomes an empty mannerism which, far from bestowing profundity, simply dissipates the force of the melodrama (though it does make an unusual film).

Similarly, when Sarris writes: "The aesthetic of camera movement over montage implies the continuousness of a visual field outside the frame of the film," he is grappling with a central yet largely unexplored question of film aesthetics. But at best he is unclear and grossly incomplete; at worst he is wrong. In fact it would be more true to say something close to the opposite of what Sarris seems to be saying: that camera movement *shows* us the continuousness of a visual field, whereas montage (or at least cutting within a single location) *implies* "the continuousness of a visual field outside the frame," since it does not show it.

The kind of careless, sloppy thinking and writing found in

PAUL WARSHOW'S *article on Raymond Queneau, "An Undiscovered Master," appeared in our March 1968 issue.*

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some of the above remarks characterizes, as one might expect, large parts of the rest of the book. Indeed, when we have culled out our little anthology of The-Best-of-Andrew-Sarris-In-This-Book, we are left with a much larger section which, although usually lively and provoking, is almost incredibly illogical, confused, wrong-headed, or nonsensical.

A GOOD DEAL of the trouble with Sarris's writing, it seems to me, lies in his use of the *auteur* theory, the avowed guideline of his criticism. Growing directly out of *la politique des auteurs* (a theory of film criticism which was conceived in the mid-50's by several French critics of the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in particular François Truffaut), the *auteur* theory is so elusive and in some ways so complex that any summary of it is bound to be oversimplified and perhaps unfair. Like a good many other slogans and rallying cries, the *auteur* theory can vary considerably in meaning depending upon the person using it and the context in which it's being used; and like most slogans, it has its good side and its bad side.

On its good side, the *auteur* theory tries to distinguish between two kinds of directors: on the one hand, those directors (the "*auteurs*") who are in control of their material and who, through film, present—like the good and great poets, novelists painters, and composers—a unique, recognizable, personal style and world-view, and, on the other, those directors who simply serve (maybe competently but nevertheless impersonally and anonymously) the conception of another or several other people (novelists, screenwriters, et. al.), thus putting out an impersonal, factory-made, highly perishable product. In this respect, the *auteur* theory honors the film medium by asking and expecting as much of it as people have asked and expected from other media. As the late André Bazin (the founder of *Cahiers du Cinéma*) suggested, the French *auteur* critics were trying to find the Shakespeares and Rembrandts of film.

This is to look at the *auteur* theory *in theory* and in the best possible light. But if the *auteur* theory is admirable in theory, in practice it is often arbitrary or absurd. For instance, in dealing with American films, the *auteur* critics tend to separate style from content and then to exalt style as an independent entity. Indeed, these critics are so hard up for any kind of personal expression in Hollywood that the mere presence of a personal style or "signature" in a director's films is sufficient to designate him as an *auteur* and to make his films automatically good (if not great). Often little or no effort is made to evaluate or judge what this style is in fact expressing (whether the director's supposed world-view is really coherent or not, whether it is original or derivative, mature or puerile, healthy or, say, sadistic, and so on). Nor is there much effort to evaluate the style itself, to ask whether or not it's vulgar, whether (like that of Bresson) it amounts to a modest and beautiful subservience to the material or (like that of Welles) it ostentatiously calls attention to itself and often goes against the grain of the material.

ANOTHER fault of the *auteur* critics is that they are both dogmatic and arbitrary in deciding who is an *auteur* and who isn't. Especially in Hollywood, the question of directorial control, of "auteurship," is often more one of degree than of kind. But the *auteur* critics tend to view the matter in black-and-white terms. A director is either an *auteur* or not, and once it has been decided whether a director belongs in the *auteur* or in the non-*auteur* category, he is likely to remain in that category on a permanent basis. To put it more crudely, but only a little unfairly, directors are either In or Out. Sarris indulges in this kind of fixed categorization in many instances—notoriously in his treatment of John Huston.*

Although the *auteur* critics do make distinctions within the work of particular directors, a kind of stigma is automatically attached to even the best films of a director who is not an *auteur* just as, conversely, even the worst films of an *auteur* are redeemed by their significance within the *oeuvre* and by the apparently unmistakable stamp upon them of the *auteur*'s style and personality. And not only are the preferences of Sarris and the French *auteur* critics often highly debatable; but their way of talking about the directors they admire is often absurdly inflated and inappropriate. Sarris calls such men as Howard Hawks and Fritz Lang "Pantheon Directors"; a literary critic who spoke of poets like Dryden, Hopkins, Ransom, and Frost as "Pantheon Poets" would sound excessive. The *auteur* critics are so eager to find the Shakespeares and Rembrandts of film that they have led themselves to believe that they have already found them, in fact seven times over.

Yet for all its absurdities, the *auteur* theory has been beneficial, even if not exactly in the ways the *auteur* critics would claim. It did bring about a generally salutary re-examination of Hollywood films —and especially of certain kinds of Hollywood films—which snobbery and prejudice had prevented most people from looking at with an open mind. And it has uncovered examples of personal expression where most people least expected to find it: in Hollywood, and in Hollywood "B" films. It showed, for example, that the Hollywood action films of Samuel Fuller (a director whom the French *auteur* critics and Sarris virtually rescued from total anonymity outside of Hollywood) were not just Hollywood action films: they stood out for their control, their feeling for

* See "Circles and Squares" in Pauline Kael's *I Lost It At the Movies*. Extremely one-sided—dealing only with Sarris's faults and never acknowledging his virtues—her article is nevertheless probably the best criticism of Sarris and of his use of the *auteur* theory. Inevitably some of my points take off from some of hers. For interesting further contributions to the *auteur* controversy, see the remarks by James Stoller and Donald Phelps in *Moviegoer* No. 1 (Winter 1964). For an informative survey of the controversy—written appropriately as comedy—see Marion Magid's "Auteur! Auteur!" (COMMENTARY, March 1964). And for an article which helps explain and clarify the theory by going into its French origins, see "The Auteur Theory Re-examined" by Donald E. Staples (in *The Emergence of Film Art*, edited by Lewis Jacobs).

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their characters, and their distinctive tight style. (In fact the Metro scenes in Bresson's great *Pickpocket* bear such a close resemblance to the brilliantly-edited subway pickpocket scene which opens Fuller's *Pickup on South Street*, made seven years earlier, that it is almost impossible to think that Bresson did not learn from Fuller in this case.)

BY AND LARGE, however, the *auteur* theory has been detrimental, especially to Sarris. Sarris may talk as though the theory serves him as a shortcut, as though it increases his chances of arriving at true perceptions and judgments and saves him time, but the exact opposite is true: not only is Sarris best when he leaves his theory furthest behind (which may explain why, on the whole, his reviews of individual films in the *Voice* are better than this book); he also tediously wastes large parts of his book either using his theory to prove his judgments of individual films or, conversely, using his preferences among individual films to bolster his unstable, forever-crumbling theory. And the lengths to which he'll go to try to prove his theory are sometimes extraordinary. Thus the section on Charles Laughton as a director is little more than the occasion for an incredibly illogical defense of one aspect of the *auteur* theory.

Elsewhere, in the course of defending the *auteur* theory, Sarris makes a remark which is, perhaps inadvertently, extremely revealing of his own distorted approach to looking at films. "Obviously," he writes, "the *auteur* theory cannot possibly cover every vagrant charm of the cinema. Nonetheless, the listing of films by directors remains the most reliable index of quality available to us short of the microscopic evaluation of every film made." The assumption behind this statement is that the only way we can evaluate a single film—without knowing something about the director or his other work—is *microscopically* (presumably by repeated viewings or perhaps by a more controlled examination in a Movieola). But most films—certainly most Hollywood films—don't call for a microscopic evaluation because they can be *experienced* fully on one viewing. I might go back to see an ordinary Western like *The Naked Spur* two, three, or four times if I wanted to study in detail the direction, the editing, the camera work, etc., of an average Hollywood film; or if I were writing a monograph on the films of James Stewart, or on the films of Janet Leigh, or on the films of Anthony Mann. Such close examination would give me a greater understanding of how it was put together; it would make me more able to talk or write about the film; it would give me a greater *appreciation* of the film (its virtues *and* its faults and limitations). But it would not, to any significant degree, change my estimate of the *stature* or the *depth* of the film. Routine two-dimensional films like *The Naked Spur* can be seen through, and seen "around," right away. There are films (*Muriel*, *8½*, *The Life of O-Haru*, *Los Olvidados*, *Children of Paradise*, etc.) which—after initially engaging our emotions, curiosity, and interest—invite us, by their richness, complexity, resonance, or difficulty, to explore them again and again. (On the whole these are, of course, the greatest films.) But it is the richness and resonance and force of the films which makes them important—and invites and "justifies" our research—not the other way around.

One's overall impression upon reading Sarris's explorations into some of the darker corners of Hollywood culture is that a kind of reverse principle is operating: instead of the films being examined because they're important, they are considered important because Sarris has researched them so heavily. It is true that with some seemingly totally negligible films, Sarris occasionally comes up with a little touch we would not have noticed and which we must grant a certain value. But why should we comb thousands of haystacks for a few rusty needles when we can get all the shiny new needles we want by going around the corner? The less successful the whole work of art is, the harder it is for any one facet to shine beautifully in it. And if the work is too

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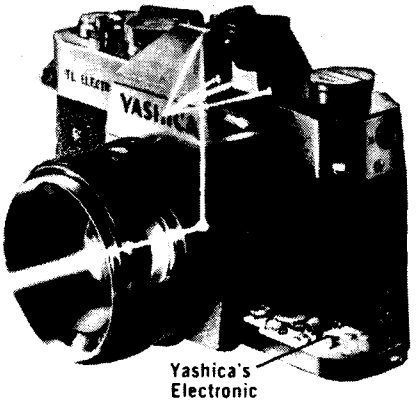

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bad, to talk about beauties of individual parts becomes almost meaningless. But it's easy to imagine Sarris as the judge of a beauty contest, giving the prize to the hideous Katisha of *The Mikado* on the basis of her "left shoulder-blade that is a miracle of loveliness."

The result is that a lot of the book seems not so much wrong or right as, simply, absurd—because the discussion of films is taking place in a kind of vacuum, without any consideration of whether the films have any meaning to anybody, whether they have any *use*. Sarris writes, for example, that the director Jacques Tourneur "brings a certain French gentility to the American cinema" and that "*Out of the Past* is still Tourneur's masterpiece, a civilized treatment of an annihilating melodrama." (Annihilating what? Itself? The characters? Our interest?) Well, *Out of the Past* (which I saw recently) is a film which never had any use as art and now has practically none even as entertainment. James Agee gave it about four lines in the *Nation*, along with two dozen other films, the month it came out in 1948. In his review he said little other than that it wasted the talents of the cameraman (Nicholas Musaraca) and of Kirk Douglas. Tourneur, who made about thirty films in Hollywood, could certainly appropriately get *some* kind of comment in a book called *The American Cinema*. It may even be true that in some way he brought "a certain French gentility" to Hollywood. But any discussion which goes happily along talking about Tourneur's "sensibility" and style, his "French gentility" and his "masterpiece" *Out of the Past*, without even dealing with the question of whether Tourneur's films have—or could have—any meaning or relevance to anyone, is simply absurd. In the sections on Tourneur and a dozen other Hollywood directors, *The American Cinema* is like an elaborate tourist guide—complete with maps and detailed descriptions and evaluations of restaurants and night spots—to some obscure Midwestern city where no tourist would ever go, or want to go.

One could forgive Sarris his absurd inflation or benign acceptance of so many unworthy films and directors if he did not also try to put down so many worthy films and directors by comparison. I want to quote his section on Jack Clayton, partly because it's relatively short, but mainly because Clayton was one of the most unappreciated directors alive even before Sarris got to him, and because it's a good example of Sarris at his most superficial, prejudiced, and blindly theoretical. Clayton is probably the most talented and the most underrated of the generation of English directors (Richardson, Reisz, Lindsay Anderson) whose first features came out in the period 1959-63. One of his films—his first feature *Room at the Top*—is well-known in this country, but he is not. Here is Sarris: "Jack Clayton represents the last word in academic direction. Every project must find its appropriate style. *Room at the Top* was nervously angry-young-mannish, *The Innocents* fluidly Jamesian, *The Pumpkin Eater* palpitatingly Pinteresque and *Our Mother's House* Gothically Dickensian. The only Clayton constant is impersonality, but such studied impersonality seems out of date." The first thing one may notice is that, to make the comments on individual films in the third sentence, one would hardly have had to see the films at all: the lowliest and most venal *Time*-writer, hurriedly trying to meet a deadline for a survey of the English cinema, could have come up with these observations almost on the basis of the credits alone (*Room at the Top* adapted from a novel by "angry young man" John Braine; *The Innocents* adapted from James's *Turn of the Screw*; *The Pumpkin Eater* with a screenplay by Harold Pinter). Sarris is too busy trying to fit Clayton into his theoretical Procrustean bed, and damning him to hell because he won't fit, to be concerned about Clayton's *films*, which—on the evidence of this paragraph—he has hardly looked at. You would never guess from Sarris that *Room at the Top* and *The Pumpkin Eater* (despite their occasional slickness) are among the few genuinely moving and exciting English-language films of the past decade. And if Sarris gave Clayton's films the sympathetic viewing he has given to the *oeuvres* of many lesser directors, he would find that, although Clayton's work may seem "impersonal" (and why "studied impersonality" was apparently once OK but is now "out of date" I have no idea), it has recognizable concerns and stylistic traits running from one film to the next. Clayton's sins in Sarris's eyes have much less to do with the quality of his films than with the presence of well-known writers among his screen credits and with the fact that (like Kubrick and Louis Malle) he usually tries something new and different with each film.

Yet *The American Cinema* not only *will* be bought by most film lovers; it *should* be bought by them. It has more information—

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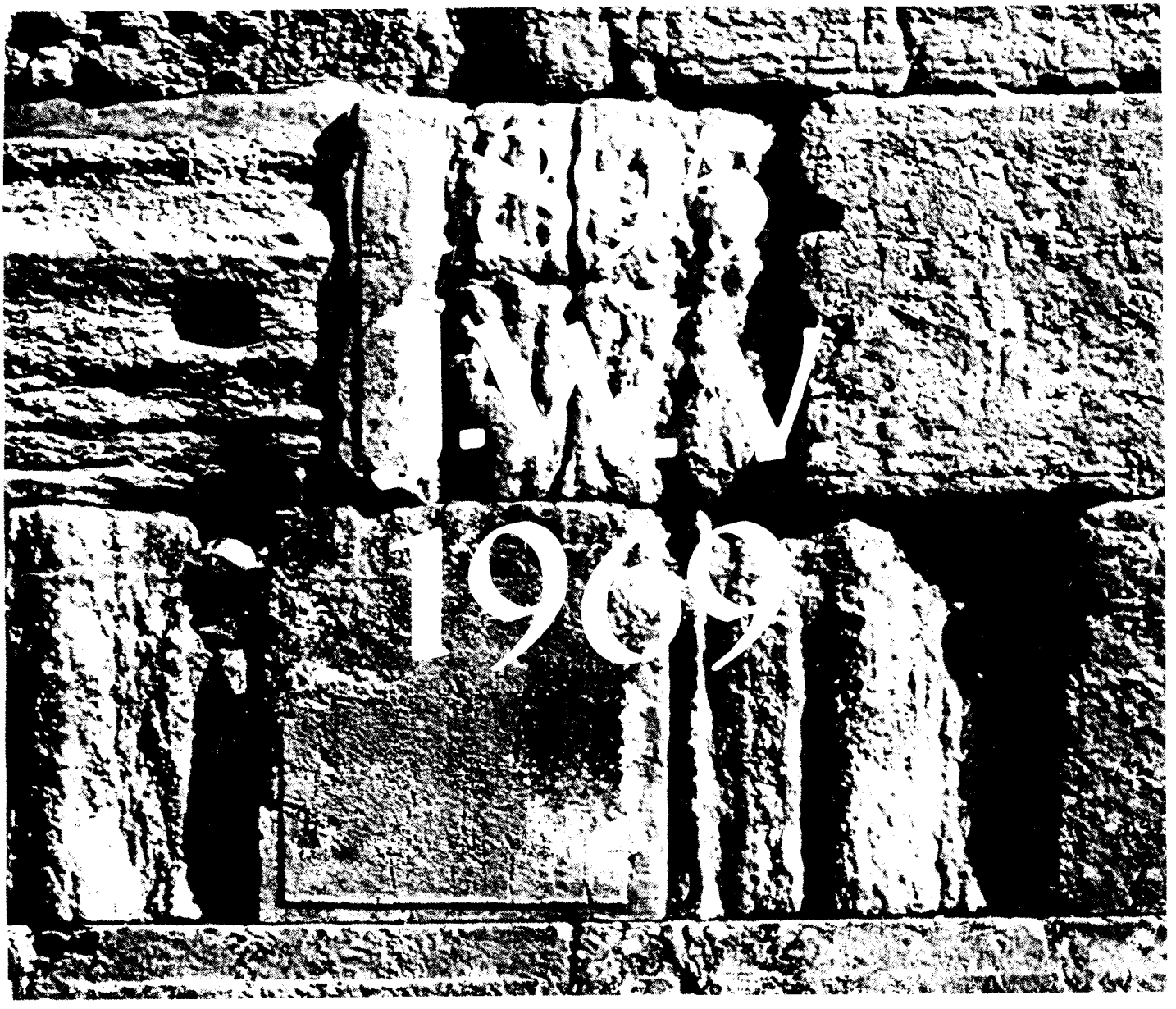

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more *useful* information—on English-language films than any book available. (It also has, at the end of the book, an 83-page directorial list of English-language films which must be the most comprehensive ever made. But even this list, culled from fifteen sources, is missing—I discovered at random—such not-exactly-obscure films as *Suddenly* and *Theodora Goes Wild.*) It is the first history of American cinema since Lewis Jacobs's *The Rise of the American Film* (1939) and it is likely to remain the most up-to-date book on English-language films for some time. Yet if this were a book on literature or music or history or painting, it probably could not have been published—certainly not without very heavy revisions. Which is one indication of how far writing on film, on the whole, is still below, or behind, writing in other fields.

Radical Jews

WEIMAR GERMANY'S LEFT-WING INTELLECTUALS. By ISTVAN DEAK. *University of California Press. 346 pp. $9.75.*

Reviewed by MARTIN JAY

AMONG THOSE who chastise today's radical intellectuals for their "irresponsible negativism," the example of Weimar Germany has often served as an analogy of compelling weight. By abandoning the republic in its hour of greatest need, the reasoning goes, Weimar's Left made certain the fascist seizure of power. Lulled by a crude Marxist dialectic that assured the inevitable triumph of the proletariat, many leftists complacently insisted on the notion of *nach Hitler, uns,* while grossly underestimating the staying power of the fascist "last stage of capitalism." Only by working with the responsible, democratic Center, the argument concludes, could the Left have helped forestall the horrors of Nazism. The parallels which can be, and often are, drawn to the current behavior of the New Left in Germany and America are too obvious to need spelling out; suffice it to say that political responsibility is equated by proponents of this argument with that pragmatic moderation which seeks at all costs to avoid arousing a right-wing backlash.

That there is some merit in this line of reasoning cannot be denied. In any era, a *politique de pire* is a nasty game, justifiable only under the most extreme circumstances. Nevertheless, the question must be asked in the case of Weimar's Left, as it should be today: how much of the critical negativism, the refusal to countenance lesser evils, was derived from a spiteful and destructive nihilism and how much was necessitated by the choices presented by the society itself? Istvan Deak's *Weimar Germany's Left-wing Intellectuals,* a study of the highly politicized, if nonaffiliated, literati who wrote for the Berlin journal *Die Weltbühne,* goes a long way toward answering that question.

ALTHOUGH Deak is overly ambitious in his choice of titles, *Die Weltbühne* did serve as an occasional forum for many of Weimar's most engaged intelligentsia. Scattered among the short biographies thoughtfully appended to Deak's text are such names as Heinrich Mann, Egon Friedell, Lion Feuchtwanger, Arnold Zweig, Egon Erwin Kisch, and Ernst Toller. The dominant figures in the life of the journal, however, were clearly its three editors, Siegfried Jacobsohn, Kurt Tucholsky, and Carl von Ossietsky. Under Jacobsohn's direction, the magazine began publication in 1905 as *Die Schaubühne,* devoted primarily to drama criticism. By 1917, however, with the prolongation of an increasingly senseless war, its purely cultural concerns were gradually replaced by more avowedly political ones. In 1918, the journal changed its name to *Die Weltbühne* and opened its columns to writers like Kurt Hiller, whose militant "activism" demanded the interpenetration of politics and *Geist* under the guidance of an ill-defined "Logocratic" cultural elite.

During the first years of the new republic Kurt Tucholsky began his prodigious contributions to the journal and after Jacobsohn's sudden death in 1926 he assumed the editorship. Although his tenure as editor was brief and he soon left Germany altogether to live in self-imposed exile in Paris, Tucholsky continued to exert enormous influence on *Die Weltbühne.* Under any and all of the five names appearing over his countless articles, he expressed the most bitter pessimism about a people he could neither live among nor simply ignore, anticipating in his writings the politics of negation which Herbert Marcuse has more recently made fashionable as the "Great Refusal." Reproached for fouling his own nest, Tucholsky replied: "They tell us that we should make positive proposals. But these are worthless without a nationwide epidemic of candor. . . . No, we cannot say 'Yes.' Not yet. We know only one thing: that we must sweep away with an iron broom all that is rotten in Germany."

Carl von Ossietsky, who succeeded Tucholsky as editor of *Die Weltbühne,* had prior to his accession been somewhat less prone to prophecies of imminent doom. But by 1926 he had become, as Deak admits, very much of an enigma. Coming originally out of the peace movement, as did many of the *Weltbühne* writers, Ossietsky was fated to direct editorial policy during the years when the magazine took a position of the greatest revolutionary militancy. The fervor of his written work contrasted sharply with the lassitude and aloofness of his personal style. Although after 1928 Ossietsky often lent his name and support to Communist causes, his grasp of Marxism was confused and impressionistic. Moreover, there was nothing in Ossietsky's lower-middle-class background that would help to explain his increasingly left-wing political sympathies. Unlike his two predecessors and the majority of *Weltbühne* writers, he lacked the one quality which might make his radicalization more easily understable: he was not a Jew.

IT WOULD BE a mistake, as Deak correctly stresses, to say that many, if not most, left-wing intellectuals in Weimar Germany simply *hap-*

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pened to be Jews. The proportion of Jews in the Left during this period, and indeed throughout the history of modern radicalism, cannot be explained as a coincidence. A better answer, which Deak quotes with approval, was given by Arnold Zweig. "The Jews are proletarians," he wrote in 1933. "They are proletarians, despite their luxury, their ten-room apartments, their university education, and their intellectual professions. The essence of proletarian existence is also symptomatic of their lives: they have no way of securing their present or their future, because they possess neither political guarantees, the right to participate in political decisions, nor do they possess the instruments of production."

And yet, a purely sociopolitical explanation such as this seems insufficient in itself when one considers the persistent involvement of Jews in left-wing politics today. The sons of suburban doctors who lock college deans in their offices can scarcely be called hidden proletarians (no matter how tickled they would be to be so honored). If they are indeed exploited, as Paul Goodman and others have been trying to tell us for years, it is not as a function of their Jewishness. Moreover, today's Jewish radical is faced with the embarrassing and paradoxical fact that, at least for the moment, the most strident voices of anti-Semitism are not those of the oppressors but those of the oppressed. Still, the fact is that, however they may appear to be lacking in direct social motivation, the number of Jews participating in radical activism remains disproportionately high.

This state of affairs is doubtless sustained in part by the lingering memory of the "proletarian" condition Zweig accurately described as the living reality of the Weimar Jew. Other factors, however, must also be acknowledged—factors which played a role in earlier periods as well. Jewish religious themes, for example, such as the hope for a messianic, worldly redemption, have an obvious affinity to the Marxist dream of an end to the "pre-historic" rule of necessity. This is clearly evident in the writings of such left-wing Weimar in-

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tellectuals as Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin, who were not part of the *Weltbühne* circle. Even to the assimilated Jewish radical of today, this similarity might well retain a subterranean resonance. Another possible influence which warrants investigation is the structure of the Jewish family and the moral stance with which it is so often associated. As Kenneth Keniston has recently made clear, the most radical students in today's New Left are often those *least* alienated from their parents. It is uncertain whether a similar situation existed during the Weimar period in Germany—when conflicts over assimilation and orthodoxy were keener than they are today—but the possibility should be explored further.

YET WHATEVER the cause of the Jewish commitment to left-wing radicalism, it should not be assumed that no other Jewish response to conditions in Weimar was possible. A viable alternative existed in Zionism, whose political solution to the dilemma of the Weimar Jew proved regrettably in the long run to be the only response which bore any fruit. It is noteworthy that nowhere in *Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals* is the question of Zionism even raised. As pessimistic as the *Weltbühne* circle was about the future of Germany, its members never abandoned their efforts to reverse its course and never entertained the notion of escaping to Palestine.

And there were, certainly, enough abuses in the domestic life of the republic and the conduct of its foreign affairs to keep *Die Weltbühne*'s attention riveted at home. Whether attacking the pernicious influence of the military, or urging reconciliation with France, or taking a stand in a hundred other causes, *Die Weltbühne* sought to free Germany from the fetters of its half-discarded Wilhelmian past. Surprisingly, as in the case of George Grosz's trial for blasphemy in 1929, it won an occasional victory. Most of its energy, however, was devoted to the larger question of the nature of the republic itself. From 1918 to 1933, what began as qualified support for parliamentary democracy turned gradually into fierce hostility toward the republic, accompanied by the demand for immediate revolution. Under Jacobsohn, *Die Weltbühne* had originally rallied to the side of the state, albeit with great reservations, against the Spartacists and their call for a *Rätediktatur*. But by 1930, with the collapse of the "party state," the journal had traveled a course which brought it clearly to the Left of the Communists, closer to Trotsky than to Thaelmann. It is this apparent reversal of loyalties which has earned the scorn of today's liberal historians. That this judgment can no longer be accepted without serious question is perhaps the major achievement of Deak's study.

For if principles were abandoned and responsibilities betrayed, Deak convincingly demonstrates that the majority socialists were among the worst offenders. Time after time, they threw away opportunities to create the social basis which might have made political democracy in Germany a real possibility. In 1919, following the first elections to the National Assembly; in 1920, after the workers' successful uprising against the Kapp putsch; and in 1922, with the storm of indignation over the murder of Walter Rathenau, sufficient popular support existed for the necessary social changes to have been made. Instead, the Social-Democratic party of Ebert and Noske, fearing the workers they claimed to represent more than they feared the continuation of a political structure built on social and economic quicksand, refused to act. Even after the impressive Social-Democratic electoral victory in 1928, the Müller government betrayed its campaign pledge to "feed children instead of building armored cruisers" and announced support for increased military expenditures.

Although *Die Weltbühne* had been willing at first to base its hopes for a united socialist movement and radically reformed Germany on the SPD, by the end of the decade Ossietsky and the others felt a lesson had been learned. As Deak argues: " . . . it was a tactical error for the SPD to seek support in the political center after 1930 when that center was rapidly disintegrating. It ought to be recognized, finally, that the Nazis and Communists did not destroy the Weimar Republic: it had been destroyed by the German bourgeoisie and the bourgeois political parties . . . who, after 1929, consistently favored an authoritarian solution. Because they clearly perceived the fallacy of the SPD's course, the writers of the *Weltbühne* could not submit to that party's discipline."

Deak does not ignore the fact that their disillusionment with the majority socialists led many of the left-wing intellectuals into a kind of naive fellow-traveling, especially in their dealings with Willi Munzenberg's Communist propaganda apparatus. In retrospect, however, the idealism which lay behind their naiveté seems less reprehensible than the craven opportunism which characterized the SPD's aping of the bourgeoisie. The crucial fact which the majority socialists stubbornly failed to accept had been grasped by the *Weltbühne* in the middle 20's: only a radical restructuring of the socio-economic basis of the republic could prevent its eventual decline into authoritarianism. If in the early 30's the only possible hope for change lay in an alliance with the Communists and in the call for revolution, the pusillanimity and shortsightedness of the republic's "responsible" parties had left no other choice. In the face of this melancholy reality, the pessimism and negativism of the *Weltbühne* circle becomes far easier to understand.

BY SYMPATHETICALLY tracing the radicalization of one of Weimar's most important, independent journals, Istvan Deak has succeeded in challenging many of the prevailing assumptions about the period as a whole. To be sure, not all of his conclusions will be readily accepted by other students of Weimar, nor will all be satisfied with the scant attention he pays to the intellectual sources of the *Weltbühne*'s increased militancy. If, for example, Ossietsky knew little of Marxism, one would like to

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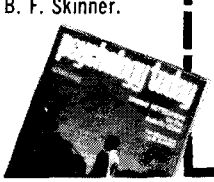

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know what the analytical foundations of his politics in fact were. Similarly, Deak neglects to probe deeply enough into the nature of the *Geist* which Hiller and others wished to guide their politics. Deak takes pains to limit himself to a "political history," but when intellectuals engage as self-consciously in politics as did those he has undertaken to study, such a limitation is difficult to uphold.

Nevertheless, it will no longer be possible to damn all of Weimar's Left for irresponsibility without answering Deak's persuasive arguments concerning at least one of its factions. But before this brings too much comfort to those who today would follow a similar path, in the belief that America's choices are equally limited, one fact which Deak makes perfectly clear ought to be thoroughly pondered and understood. If Weimar's left-wing intellectuals did not destroy what was already collapsing from within, they were also totally powerless to achieve the alternative they so passionately sought. And in politics, impotence, however "responsible," is a quality historians may choose to honor or explain away, but contemporaries can only mourn.

Irish Tales

A SET OF VARIATIONS. By FRANK O'CONNOR. *Knopf. 338 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by ELIZABETH DALTON

THE IRISH have an insidious gift for making their national failings attractive. This collection of twenty-seven stories of Frank O'Connor, written between 1957 and his death in 1966, presents us with a stifling petit-bourgeois society which seems deliberately organized to starve the mind and the emotions. Young people, crippled by poverty and sexual timidity, wait for their parents to die in order to marry; illegitimate children dream and mourn over families they never know; middle-aged bachelors nest with their mothers; priests live and die in terrible loneliness. Through all the stories runs the ubiquitous influence of the Church—like drink, a curse of the Irish. And yet somehow, this depressing material is turned in O'Connor's stories to charm. The bigots and celibates and drunks seem to be winking over their shoulders at us, whispering "It's all right, you know, we're *Irish*." There is almost nothing they won't try to pass off as mere eccentricity. In "A Life of Your Own," a policeman is called in by a girl who has come home to find her house broken into, a pair of panties missing, and "I love you" scrawled above the bed in lipstick. "'. . . If I was you, Miss Harty, I wouldn't worry my head about him,'" says Sergeant Lenihan kindly. "'Sure, after all, what is he, only a poor harmless sexual maniac? The country is full of them.'"

A musical-comedy Ireland lies just beneath the surface of the stories; even the best of them dissolve at some point into whimsy or sentimentality. In the title story, "A Set of Variations on a Borrowed Theme," Kate Mahoney, a rough, loving old woman, becomes foster mother to two illegitimate children and through them triumphs over age and loneliness, loving the boys so fully that on her death bed she honestly believes they are her own. The story is touching, and it is delightful to listen to Kate talk to the children: "'Oh, you poor putog, you're perished,'" she sighs: or "'He have the heart scalded in me. I'd want ten eyes and hands, picking things up after him. . . . Go on, you little gligeen!'" Yet finally the story goes on too long, Kate and the situation are worked too hard, and one begins to resent the rather calculated way one's feelings are being played upon. "A Minority" is about two Protestant boys in a Catholic boarding school. Denis Halligan gets tired of being left out and decides to convert, but Willy Stein, a tough, anti-social boy, clings stubbornly to his Protestantism, a lone outcast. Later Denis finds out that Willy is not even a real Protestant, but a Jewish refugee; the priests have only told him he is a "Proddy" to spare him the jeers of the other boys.

> . . .alone and despairing, he still clung to a faith that was not his own for the sake of a father and mother he had already almost forgotten, who had been murdered half a world away and whom he would never see again. For a single moment Denis saw the dirty little delinquent whom everybody pitied and despised transfigured by a glory that he himself would never know.

The idea of the story is wonderful, but it is weakened by this fulsomely explicit statement of it and by the endearing cuteness of both boys, which prevents the reader from feeling the reality of Willy's pain and isolation.

Something in O'Connor's technique, and ultimately in his temperament, keeps us at a distance from his stories and muffles their intensity. Character and motivation are approached from the outside, often merely described or summarized in a way that seems perfunctory and superficial. Moreover, the narrative is usually spread out over a long period of time, often many years, so that the dramatic focus is widened and blurred and our attention is turned to the voice which provides the continuity. Like the teller of the tale in the Irish oral tradition to which he was indebted, O'Connor is the most convincing presence in his own stories. The personality that informs his fiction is an extraordinarily attractive one; it is tolerant, humane, and indestructibly hopeful. Yet in its commitment to what is good and redeeming in human nature, there is a lack of understanding of moral ambiguity, of passion, of the depths beneath the surface of behavior. Because the possibilities of pain and darkness in life are not fully realized, the note of affirmation on which the stories end seems facile and heartwarming, like human-interest items in the newspaper. When cruelty and evil appear, they are somehow made innocuous by the narrator's good-humored wisdom. Sex, as an action or a passion, is almost entirely absent, though its telltale result does appear in the person of an occasional illegitimate child. Like a kindly confessor, O'Connor seems to see it as a failing to which the best of us may now and then be subject.

ELIZABETH DALTON'S *review of* Real People *by Alison Lurie appeared in August.*

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IT IS interesting to compare this last collection with O'Connor's first book of stories, *Guests of the Nation*, published in 1931 when he was twenty-eight. The narrative manner of the early stories is less accomplished; some of them have a rough, anecdotal, fortuitous quality, depending on a remarkable character or a trick of fate, as though the plot had not fully achieved organic form. They deal mostly with the experience of the civil war of 1922, with its random violence and reckless cruelty and idealism. Like the later stories, they are funny, but their humor is of a more primitive, even macabre, kind—it is constantly in the presence of death. And yet they are full of a harsh, mysterious beauty and excitement. Set in dank miserable cottages, in Free State prisons, in barns and lanes and during midnight ambushes, they all seem to take place in a darkness illuminated by occasional brilliant flares of poetic feeling. "Nightpiece with Figures" is typical of the mood of the volume. In this story four young IRA soldiers are hidden in a convent barn by two nuns, an old Gaelic-speaking lay sister and a beautiful young choir nun, who stands in the glow of a lantern and speaks to them passionately and unforgettably of Ireland. Throughout these stories, there is a kind of tension between realism and romanticism, between an Ireland full of misery and drunkenness and brutality, and the ideal, almost mystical Ireland of the two nuns. Yet the writer seems very close to his subjects; the literary self-consciousness of the later stories is absent.

Frank O'Connor wrote great stories, masterpieces such as "Guests of the Nation," the brilliant title-piece of the first volume, and "Uprooted," a beautiful story where he touches an authentic source of feeling in Irish life, the mysterious imaginative power that breaks out in the music and the wild metaphorical extravagance of Irish speech. But for the most part, intensity and passion went out of his work over the years, and a layer of charm came over it. Some of the later stories are irresistibly comic, particularly those about Larry Delaney, the prissy kid who gets kicked out of his mother's bed in "My Oedipus Complex," finds out where babies come from in "The Genius," and drinks his father's pint in "The Drunkard." They rely increasingly, however, on a somewhat too ingratiating wit and on stereotyped notions of the humor and pathos of Irish life. This last volume contains some good and entertaining stories, but little to remind us of the author's best work. What remains is principally the music of the narrator's voice, and the genuine sweetness of personal temper that informs everything Frank O'Connor wrote.

The OEO

THE GREAT SOCIETY'S POOR LAW: A NEW APPROACH TO POVERTY. By SAR A. LEVITAN. *Johns Hopkins. 348 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by BEN B. SELIGMAN

IT SHOULD BE made clear at the outset that this is not a book about poverty. Dr. Levitan's study, which was funded by the Ford Foundation and was produced over a five-year period, is rather a remarkably detailed history and analysis of the Office of Economic Opportunity and its abortive attempt to confront poverty in America. Without question, *The Great Society's Poor Law* will become the principal source for anyone wishing to follow the conduct of the OEO program from its inception; no other book now available covers the same ground or provides such a wealth of factual information on design, strategy, and activity. That in the end Dr. Levitan finds it almost impossible to assess OEO's achievements, such as they may be, is understandable; he must in any case be commended for rejecting the self-serving platitudes issued as substitues for data by OEO's public-relations experts.

Toward the end of his book, Levitan remarks *en passant* that

BEN B. SELIGMAN, *professor of economics and director of the Labor Center at the University of Massachusetts, is the author of* Main Currents in Modern Economics, Most Notorious Victory, *and* Economics of Dissent.

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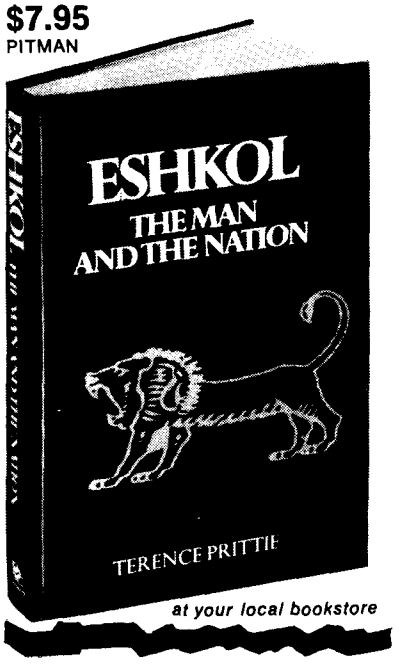

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poverty has declined sharply. I would contend, to the contrary, that the alleged marked reduction in poverty is a myth, indeed one of the major myths promulgated in recent years. Officials in Washington proudly point to the "fact" that the proportion of the population below the poverty line has dropped to about 11 per cent, or about 22 million persons. Such estimates are in my opinion based on specious statistical analyses, consisting of arbitrary calculations compounded by the strange illusion that prosperity has spread its warmth over all Americans.

Considerable discussion of this issue has taken place among cognoscenti and statistical experts. For the purposes of establishing minimum income criteria everyone has apparently settled on the estimating technique devised in 1964 by Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security Administration—a technique that permits a variety of poverty lines to emerge, depending on geography, size of family, and related factors. Miss Orshansky took the figure supplied in the Department of Agriculture's Economy Food Plan—at that time 22 cents per meal per person in a four-person family—and multiplied it by three, thus establishing a range of standards which would today cover a span from $1145 for a one-member farm family to $5430 for a city family of seven or more. The pivot figure is $3335 for a city family of four.

This last figure is the one currently in use to estimate the number of poor persons. Unfortunately, the Orshansky method, while certainly more flexible than the rigid cut-off line first adopted by the Council of Economic Advisers, is just as arbitrary. Why a multiplier of three? Some Washington experts—notably Herman Miller of the Census Bureau—are now suggesting that a more reasonable calculation would have been to multiply the Economy Food Plan figure by four. Currently, the Agriculture Department's standard works out to a weekly food outlay of $4.90 per person. For a city family of four, this would place the poverty line at approximately $4100—over $700 a year more than the official figure. On this basis the number of America's poor actually comes closer to 30 than to 22 million. To be sure, if we applied the same method retroactively we could demonstrate that over the years many persons have raised themselves above the poverty line, but this should not blind us to the fact that there are still substantially more poor persons in this country than we have been led to believe.

THE SITUATION appears even worse when we turn to the problem of budgetary needs, for then we must add the near-poor to the rolls. For example, in New York City it would have required $6021 in 1967 to maintain a family of four on a "lower living standard" budget (today it would cost about an additional 10 per cent). This is an official figure of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and it is hardly munificent. Food prices in this budget were based on figures in the Agriculture Department's low-cost food plan, shelter costs were derived from the low end of the rental scale, and the clothing allowance covered replacements only. Any family forced to live on this budget—and the number of such families is large indeed—would surely be classified as near-poor.

Hence, it is not surprising that Levitan should conclude his study with the biblical admonition, "the poor shall never cease out of the land." He is considerably less sanguine than other scholars who, meeting the argument that poverty may well be a permanent anomaly in our affluent society, assert that the "incidence of poverty will continue to fall" or that we shall one day look back on the 1960's as the decade "that opened the door to the final eradication of poverty." In the light of present reality these views are otiose, and Levitan's study of the one great effort to eliminate poverty shows why. Indeed, how could one expect that a billion or two dollars a year would achieve a cure when the Federal government, without much effect, was already spending roughly $18 billion in aid to the poor? The latter figure may at first glance appear surprisingly high: it includes old-age in-

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surance, manpower training, food stamp programs, public housing, youth services, and many other programs—a hodgepodge of uncoordinated ad hoc efforts that have been around for a long time. If these programs did not succeed in effecting a substantial reduction in the numbers of the poor, surely the OEO program, which represented less than one-tenth of the total Federal outlays on behalf of the poor, could scarcely be considered a total "war on poverty." The plain fact is that it will take an enormous expenditure of money, close to what we spend on the war in Vietnam, to begin to overcome the economic and social pathology that typifies poverty.

I DO NOT mean to suggest that the history of OEO is completely devoid of accomplishments, or at least of potential accomplishments. The Head Start program, which attempted pre-school training for ghetto children, appears to have been worthwhile, although Levitan does not hesitate to specify its shortcomings. At any rate, Head Start did try to view each child as a unique individual which is more than the regular educational establishment could do. Upward Bound, a program that tried to recapture high-school youngsters for higher education, similarly merits the author's approval, though here too there are justifiable qualifications. Levitan also has a kind word for OEO's Legal Services, a program that sought to counterbalance the legal indignities heaped on ghetto residents for decades. He is less happy with VISTA, a program that baffles him, as it does others; how, he asks, is one to evaluate activities that are judged by such criteria as "dedication" and "involvement," and result in little more than "good feeling"?

One might also consider the Job Corps, much of whose work was simply turned over to private contractors. While Levitan is not overly enthusiastic about corporate involvement in general, he does suggest that the participation of private operators in Job Corps programs was a welcome expression of business responsibility. One might have wished, however, for a closer examination of the way in which Job Corps camps were operated. The sort of paramilitary training that was instituted in some of them was, to say the least, of dubious value for home and neighborhood. And as Levitan readily concedes, the corporations "viewed the activity as a hedge against slackening defense expenditures," a contingency they need not, it turns out, have worried about.

ACCORDING to a former OEO deputy director, the entire War on Poverty effort did not reach more than 6 per cent of the poor, or about 1.8 million persons. Although others have claimed a higher figure, it is evident in any case that relatively few people

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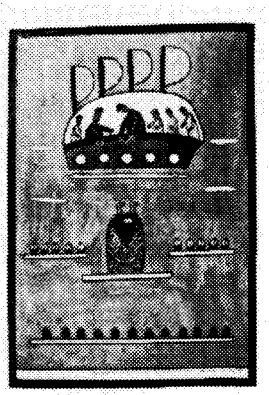

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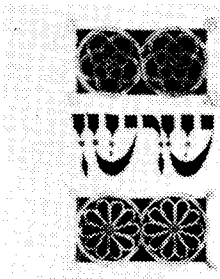

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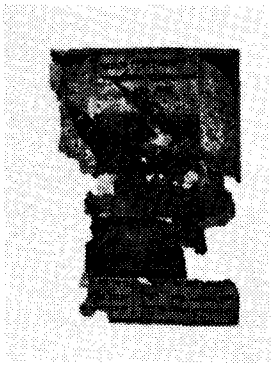

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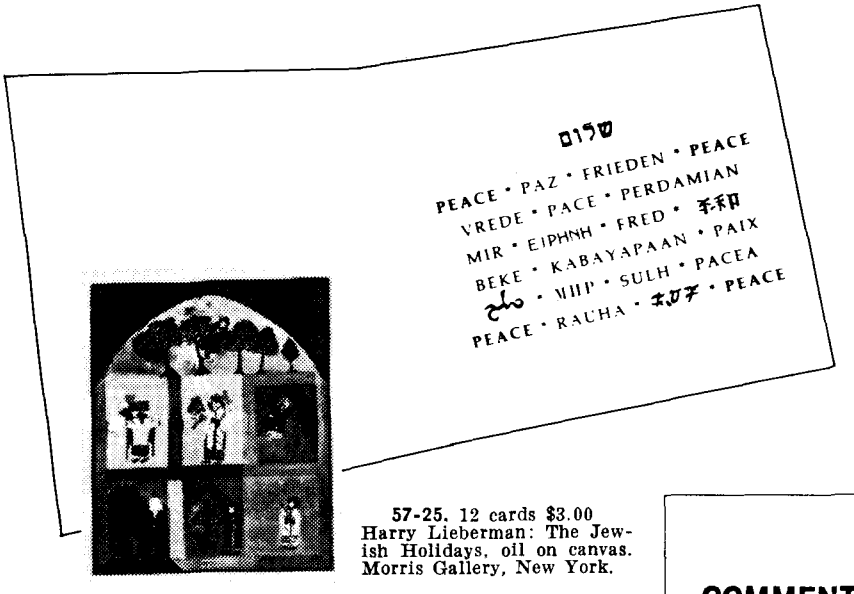
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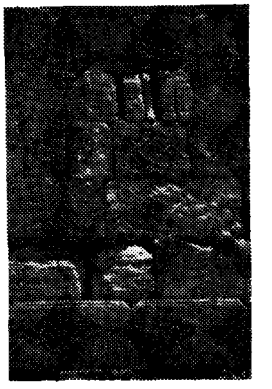

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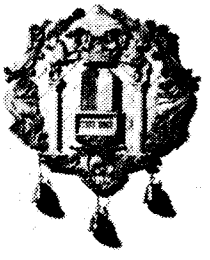

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were affected by all the OEO programs combined. The task assigned to the agency was simply beyond the limited resources that Congress made available. And until that situation can be reversed, the poor will be here to stay.

Mao's Economy

INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY IN COMMUNIST CHINA. By BARRY M. RICHMAN. *Random House. 968 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN K. FAIRBANK.

THIS MASSIVE volume lives up to its subtitle: *A Firsthand Study of Chinese Economic Development and Management—With Significant Comparisons with Industry in India, the USSR, Japan, and the United States.* The author is an industrial management specialist with experience in comparative studies. He made a two-month visit to Communist China in 1966 as a Canadian citizen, visited eleven major cities, and surveyed thirty-eight industrial enterprises, formally interviewing more than two-hundred Chinese and compiling and collecting data moment by moment. As a management specialist, he knew what he was after and he sets it all forth systematically and in detail. The book is long-winded partly because the author wants to make his observations available to the general reader as well as the specialist, and so he spells things out at length. He devotes his first 120 pages to a "conceptual framework" and the next 450 pages to the Chinese "environment," prefatory to a final 300 pages on "structure, operations, and performance." The book thus embodies an entire course of study and plunges one into micromanagement and macromanagement and such arcane matters as "the constraint management-process matrix." In this terminology, instead of facing "problems" like most of us, management faces "constraints" of all kinds. Under these rather esoteric headings Professor Richman actually lays out his impressions and a good deal of information on subjects like the state of Chinese education; the general range of attitudes toward authority, work, science, risk-taking, and the like; the bearing of law, the military, and politics on management; and the general economic situation in which it has to operate. He then summarizes quantitatively the often fragmentary and disconcertingly wide-ranging evidences of growth in various lines, takes a look at the organization of planning, and finally analyzes the summarized data from the thirty-eight enterprises he visited.

THE RESULT of this vigorous look-see and report is over-long but nevertheless systematic and comprehensive within its terms of reference. The occasional comparisons with other countries in which the author has had experience give an added dimension, and his first-hand observations on the firms he visited are obviously skilled and highly critical. He is modest in his claims to wisdom, though certainly loquacious and full of his observations. For example, on industrial planning in China he describes the general "planning methodology," which uses "planning by material balances . . . a rather crude form of input-output procedure." He then describes "the planning process," which goes through various "up" and "down" stages, and gives examples. Next, an account of "supply and sales-order conferences," which are unusual in Communist countries, again with examples. Finally, some comments on "flexibility in planning."

Judging by his notes, Mr. Richman is versed in the literature on the Chinese Communist economy, though his Y. L. Wu of p. 939 is the same as his W. L. Yuan of p. 932; his H. Suyin is surnamed Han; and his J. Caber of the Harvard Law School is Jerome Cohen. Such minute slips lend a refreshing verisimilitude: here is a man actually reporting from a field investigation on the scene, not from the literature in our libraries. This is very much to be welcomed and applauded.

Richman concludes that "China currently has a significant lead over India" in her economic performance. In 1966 the average Chinese citizen, he thinks, was living better than at any time before the Communists came to power. But he comes down hard on the economic evil of "ideological extremism." The real issue for China is whether fanaticism is to prevail or whether "managerial, technical, and economic rationality" prevails. He finds that "key aspects of Red China's brand of Maoist-Marxist-Leninist ideology are in basic conflict with effective management and efficient enterprise performance." Unfortunately the "Red Chinese fanatics are following a blindly revolutionary, grossly impatient, and irrational course." The issue, one gathers, is in the minds of the Chinese leadership—the more they feel impelled to extremist ideas, the more they are likely to be frustrated in their desire for economic strength. This seems like a formula for an explosive mixture, but perhaps for implosion more than explosion. The whole thrust of Mr. Richman's report is to suggest that even during the most extreme ideological divagations, the Chinese leadership stratum is pretty well absorbed in its domestic situation.

JOHN K. FAIRBANK *is director of Harvard University's East Asian Research Center.*

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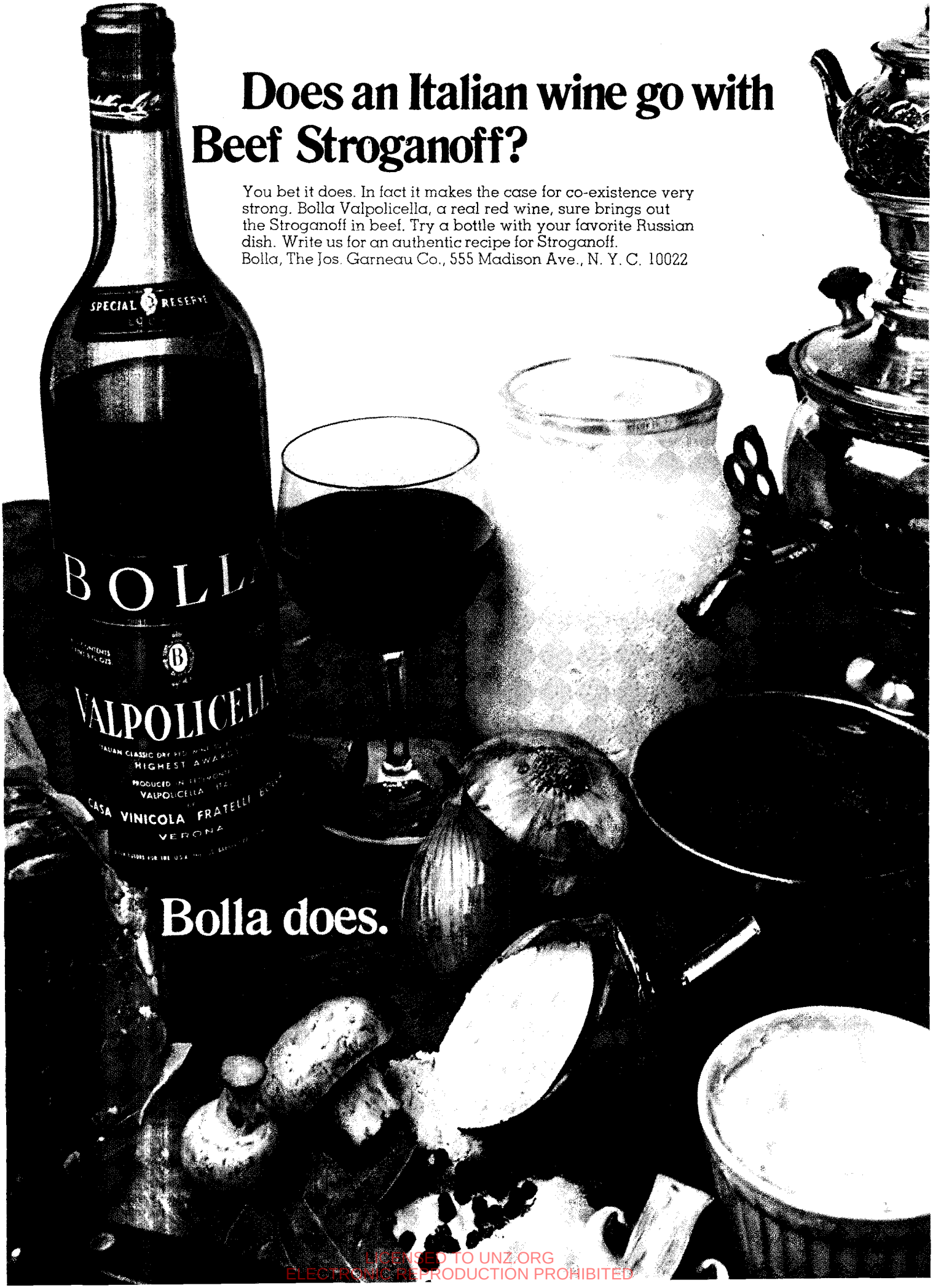

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